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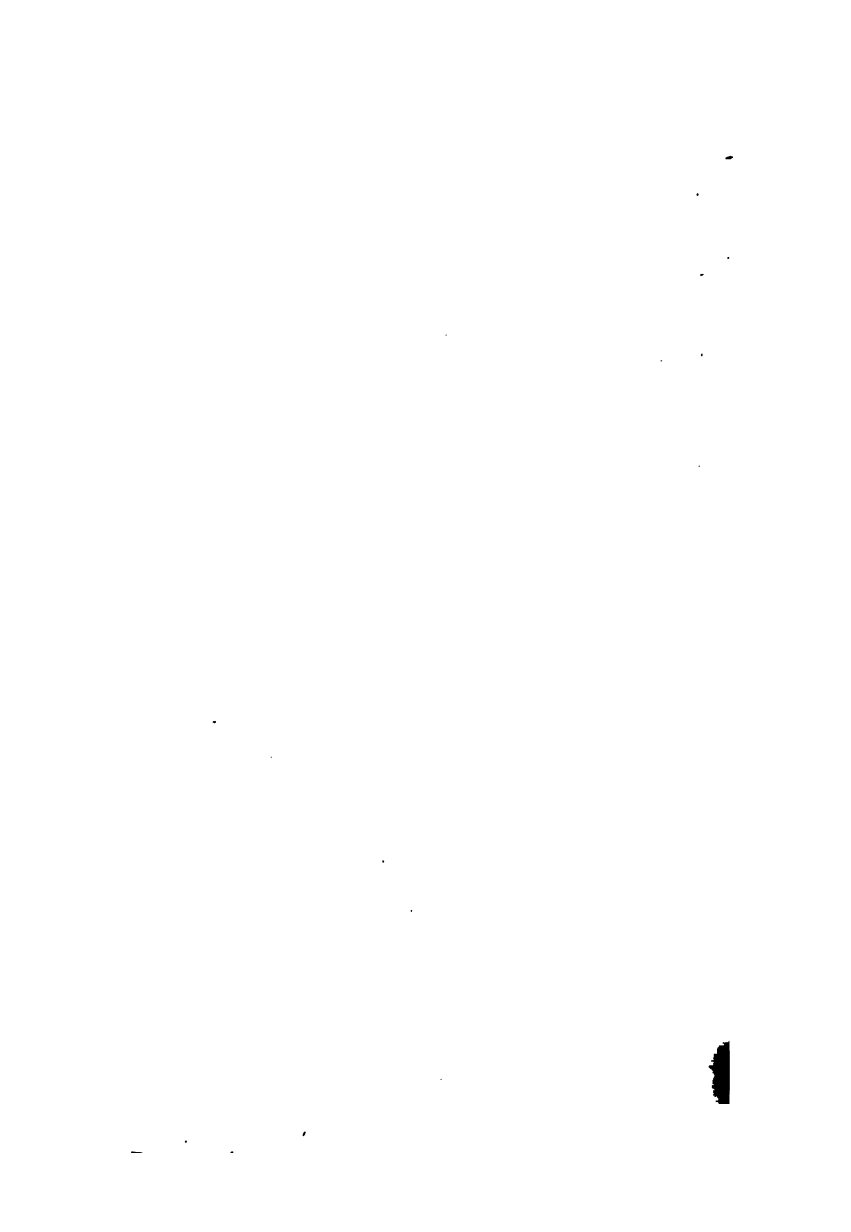
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The Pioneer Preacher
THE PIONEER PREACHER.

BY

PAUL CREYTON,

AUTHOR OF "FATHER BRIGHTHOPE,"
"MARTIN MERRIVALE," ETC.

BOSTON.
PHILLIPS, SAMPSON, AND COMPANY.
NEW YORK: J. C. DERBY
1855.

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The Pioneer Preacher

THE PIONEER PREACHER.

BY

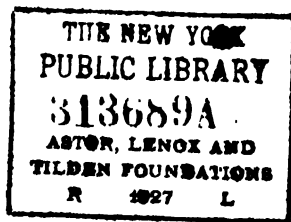
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The Pioneer
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Preface

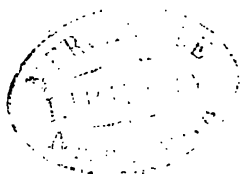
PREFACE.

AMONG the most agreeable things I remember is the delight with which, when a child, I used to listen to tales of the backwoods as they fell from lips of experience. The comfortable chimney-corner, the genial story-teller, the attentive group gathered round the roaring fire, and those wonderful, long winter evenings, which have grown so brief and unromantic since, — these images of the past are still golden in my memory; and amid the weightier occupations of life, it is even now refreshing to travel back in thought and reproduce those stories of long ago.

If the reader can sympathize with such feelings, he may find somewhat to please him in the pages of "Ironthorpe." I will tell him in advance, however, that no fine romance of thrilling adventures and bold exploits is laid before him. My chief ambition has been to paint a truthful picture of pioneer life, such as *I have so often heard described*, — simple, natural,

and fresh, with a quiet coloring of humor in it, now and then, and the atmosphere of novelty investing the whole.

“Ironthorpe,” then, possesses at least one meritorious feature: its scenes have their foundation in truth. Aside from this, those rough roads and difficult wild paths of life, contrasted with the great highways and thronged streets of our own feverish society, carry, alike to the hearts of the proud rich and of the discontented poor, so plain and so deep a lesson, that there is no need to say in what especial points the moral of the story lies.



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IRONTHORPE,

THE PIONEER PREACHER.

I.

REBECCA'S OUTFIT.

MR. NORBURN and Miles Haney had gone on before, driving the oxen with their heavy load of goods through the snow.

Rebecca was to follow in Mr. Oakleaf's sleigh. And now the morning approached which was to witness her separation from all those friends she had loved so long, and from the sweet home scenes around which the tender recollections of her happy youth were entwined. But her heart no longer swelled with grief, under the shadow of that coming day, as it had done at first; for since her husband's *departure her hopes and affections had flown*

with him into the dim solitudes of the Western woods. Love led the way, making it easy for the young wife to go after.

William had been absent three days. On the fourth morning, Rebecca was up long before dawn, active and elate, making final preparations for the journey.

Since the load of goods had gone, Mrs. Baldwin had discovered that she could spare many articles of clothing and of house-keeping usefulness that would be of service in the new settlement. These had been got together the night before and packed into a tight oak chest. And now, the prudent mother, having assured herself that every thing was right, inserted in corners where she could make room an additional ball of yarn, a pair of holders, and a roll of cloth that would do for patches; upon which the stout lid was closed and nailed down.

A small sack of choice dried fruit, a few pints of loose chestnuts, and a pewter tea-pot, crammed full of little bags of peach-pits, melon, pumpkin, and squash seeds, were bestowed in a large wooden bowl, that could not be got into the chest, and secured by a coarse linen sheet drawn over the top like a drum-head, and *tied by the corners at the bottom.*

The wooden bowl was placed on the chest, by the door, and Rebecca's cloak and hood were laid upon the wooden bowl, to be at hand when Mr. Oakleaf arrived.

"You're sure you have got your purse safe?" said Mrs. Baldwin.

"Yes, ma," replied Rebecca, pressing her hand upon her bosom, to satisfy herself.

"Well, now you must eat a mouthful. I've put up plenty of cakes and apples and dried beef in your satchel, to eat on the road; but you must n't start on an empty stomach."

Rebecca had no appetite; but to please her mother, she sat down with the family, and drank a cup of tea. That last meal — if such it could be called — in the comfortable old kitchen, with the yellow light from the broad fire-place painting the walls, and casting a soft glow on the faces around the table, poor Rebecca never forgot. Animated as she had been, all the morning, at the thought of hastening to rejoin Mr. Norburn, sad feelings came over her now. Her eyes kept filling with tears in spite of her resolution to be cheerful, and she could not swallow a morsel.

"*Sha'n't I put some of this johnny-cake into*

your satchel ? ” asked her mother. “ You will be hungry afore noon, and I warrant it ’ll taste good cold.”

Rebecca did not care ; and accordingly three blocks of johnny-cake were added to the private stores of her satchel.

After the mockery of a breakfast, Mrs. Baldwin, taking a candle, called her daughter into the other room, opened a drawer of the tall bureau, and produced a mysterious treasure tied up in a stocking.

“ Your father and I have prepared a little surprise for you,” said she, smiling tenderly, tears trembling in her eyes the while. “ We had ’em made from half-dollars we laid up out of the dried-apples money. You was always remarkable good to work on fruit, and we meant ^{it} you should have something of this kind when you went to house-keeping.”

So saying she undid the stocking, and discovered a handsome set of silver teaspoons.

“ O ma ! ” cried Rebecca, bursting into tears, as she saw her own name engraved on the handles. “ You are so good, so good ! What beauties ! I never expected any thing but the pewter set ; but I am so glad to have these ! *Let me show them to Fanny and the boys.*”

"They have seen 'em," said her mother. "Your father and I showed 'em to all the children but you, the night we brought 'em home ; and they deserve credit for keeping the secret so well."

"Now I know what Fanny meant, when she said there was a stocking somewhere in the house, that would astonish me when I saw it ! " exclaimed Rebecca, laughing through her tears. "Then Isaac told me he expected that, out in the woods there, all my children would be born with silver spoons in their mouths, — the dear, mischievous boy ! "

"I am glad we could afford to get you so good a set," resumed her mother, having given the statistics of cost of stock and price of making. "But I charge you to be careful of 'em. I wouldn't pretend to use 'em except for company, for years to come."

"They will be apt to last well, then, I should think ! " rejoined Rebecca, with pleasant humor, wiping her eyes. "I don't anticipate much trouble from visitors out there in the woods, — unless the Indians and bears take a fancy to us."

"Well, once in a great while I'd have out

the silver set, if only to look at when you are alone," said Mrs. Baldwin. "You and William can take comfort sitting down to tea now and then with the China cups and new spoons, and fancying your old friends around you. You 'll think of me then, Becky, I know."

"O, how often shall I think of you, ma, when I am in our little log-house in the wilderness! How I shall manage, without you to advise and help me, I don't know."

"There, there! don't cry! You will do well, I am sure. Only remember every thing I have told you, — about having the right kind of emptings, in particular. Good bread," said Mrs. Baldwin, "is the main-stay of a family."

"What do families do in the woods, where there are no mills, and where it must be long before grain can be raised?" asked Rebecca, with a smile.

"If you find it's going to be hard to get flour, you must economize what you take with you. Next to bread comes potatoes. They're easy to raise and easy to bake. But you will know all what's for the best, when you get settled," added Mrs. Baldwin, in despair of teaching her daughter all the details of housekeep-

ing in a new country, where every one must get wisdom at first hand from Dame Experience.

She went on, however, repeating all her favorite maxims of domestic science, to impress them upon Rebecca's mind at parting.

In the mean time she had carefully returned the spoons to the folds of the stocking, and found a safe lodging for them in the young wife's petticoat pocket. She was winding up with an earnestly expressed hope that her daughter would not lose them on the way, or suffer them ever to lie around the house where they might be stolen, when a sleigh was heard driving up to the door.

It was Mr. Oakleaf and his party. Rebecca had not a moment to lose. She hurried on her things, while the chest and wooden bowl were being bestowed in the sleigh-box. Then with many tears she kissed each member of the family an affectionate good-by. It was all over with in a minute; and she found herself, muffled in comforter and hood, packed away in the sleigh by Mrs. Oakleaf's side.

"Look out the wooden bowl don't get broke," cried her mother from the door, as the party drove away.

II.

MR. OAKLEAF'S PARTY.

REBECCA cried a good deal during the first few miles of the journey ; for it seemed to her that she might never return to the dear home she was leaving, and that she might see the faces of the loved ones there no more.

On the top of the first hill, she summoned courage to look back. She knew it was her last opportunity to see the old homestead, for in a few minutes the ground would rise between and shut it from her sight, perhaps for ever.

It was in the dull gray dawn of a February morning. The air was still, and not a shadow moved upon the white waste of snow that covered the earth. Only the horses' hoofs and the squeaking runners broke the cold silence ; and as the party passed beneath the bare, black oak-trees on the hill, not a branch stirred, not a

limb creaked, not a dry leaf fluttered in the wind.

Looking back in the midst of such a scene, no wonder Rebecca's bosom felt wild throbs of pain. The quaint old house and homely barn, with their brown gables, and snow-covered roofs; the great well-sweep, dimly seen; the zigzag lines of dark rail-fence; the white-topped hay-stack; and the sombre orchard, over-spreading the earth's wintry canvas with an inky blur, — all receded from her sight. The hill arose behind her, closing the scene; and presently her misty eyes saw the ghostly oak-trees defined against the brightening sky, looking like black tracery on a field of silver.

"Come, Reuben," suddenly cried Mrs. Oakleaf, "do drive faster! Else let me take the lines; the horses know when they have me to deal with."

Mr. Oakleaf made some observation touching the necessity of favoring a team at the commencement of a long journey; at which his wife laughed contemptuously.

"I don't care for the team," said she. "You baby your horses till they ain't worth a straw for business."

"Gently, gently, Mrs. O.," replied Reuben, good-humoredly. "Don't get into a fret. The old Johnnies are doing well enough."

So saying, he touched the old Johnnies with the whip. They trotted along leisurely, like experienced horses that had seen the world, and knew who was in earnest with them, and who was not.

Mrs. Oakleaf was quiet for some minutes. She talked to Rebecca in her off-hand, blunt, independent way, telling her she mustn't go to being a baby now, but keep a good heart, — with kind intentions, no doubt, but certainly not with happy effect. Rebecca was glad when her attention was once more drawn to the horses.

"I tell you what, Reuben!" she exclaimed, "if you don't whip up that team, I'll walk. Hold on, — let me get out. I won't ride with you another rod."

Any man but Mr. Oakleaf would probably have taken her at her word. But Mr. Oakleaf possessed a conciliatory disposition, and prided himself on knowing how to manage his wife and have every thing his own way.

"Softly, softly, Mrs. O.," said he, with in-

creased good humor, touching the horses again in a rather more serious manner. "Sit still, Mrs. O. The old Johnnies are doing well. H'ep, Pete, — you old scamp!" plying the lash once more. "Away with you Maj., you rascal!"

"Let me get hold of that whip once!" said Mrs. Oakleaf, reaching over with her strong arm.

"No, no, no, no! I would n't now. The old Johnnies are doing well, only let 'em alone," interposed Reuben, trying to pacify her. "Come, come, Salome! there, there! that 'll do."

"I tell ye I'm going to get over the ground faster than this," cried Mrs. Oakleaf, laying on the whip. "When we get to a tavern, the team can rest while we warm. I've no notion of creeping along the road at this rate all day."

Rebecca was beginning to be amused. The horses, knowing from experience whom they had to deal with, struck into a fast trot, then into a gallop, Reuben holding them in with all his might.

At that moment, in a farm-yard they were passing, a cock crowed jubilantly. The wintry

air of the morning rang with the clear, swelling, joyous, proud, and defiant jet of sound blown out from Chanticleer's high-keyed bugle of a throat.

"Ma, was that a hen that crowed?" asked a small, faint voice, coming from a nest of straw and blankets on the bottom of the sleigh.

"No, Timmy," said Mrs. Oakleaf. "It was a rooster. Hens don't crow. Now lie still and go to sleep."

Rebecca smiled secretly. She wondered if Mr. Oakleaf was as well satisfied as his wife appeared to be, touching the crowing of hens.

These pleasant domestic scenes served to divert the young wife's mind from her grief. The advance of morning, too, contributed to raise her spirits. The eastern sky burned far up with ruddy flames, in which floated long, bright bars of cloud as in a golden sea. Then the snowy hill-tops blushed ever so coldly and faintly as the sun kissed them, and the bleak forest-trees warmed in the paly glow. The banks on the road-side glittered and sparkled all over with points of crystal, — a lavish waste of white diamonds wrought by the magical frost.

Meanwhile the world had shaken off its

slumbers. The air was full of clear, sweet sound. Farm-house chimneys hung out long flags of smoke, that trailed in dark, fantastic folds, with slow-moving shadows, far over the roofs of snow. Young lads, bright and rosy with health, came running from the low cow-sheds, and carried to kitchen doors their shallow milk-pails, springing along the squeaky paths. Here a farmer dragged out corn-stalks from his wide barn-doors, scattering bundles around by the fences on the trodden snow, for the hungry cattle and sheep; and there his neighbor opposite rolled off clouds of hay from the notched side of a stack, one half of which, smoothly shaved down from the top, still lifted its cap of snow above his head. Another, standing by a half-buried wood-pile, with his axe struck into a frozen log before him, whipped his sides with his hands. Farther on, a fat farmer led a pair of horses fat as himself, and far more sleekly handsome, down a lane, at the end of which a boy was chopping out a trough of ice, while a pail of thawing-water steamed on the top of the pump.

As they proceeded, these way-side scenes became less and less familiar to Rebecca's eye.

Soon all her friends were left behind ; the circle which bounded her local acquaintanceship was passed ; and no more through frosty window-panes, or in half-open doors, she saw well-known faces, that looked wonderingly at first, then smiled and nodded recognition, as the sleigh drove by.

Novel scenes diverted her, and excited her imagination. She thought less of her old home, than of the new one she was going to seek, — less of all the loved ones left behind, than of the one beloved who had gone before. The wintry sunshine, the frosty air, the inspiring beauty of the snow-scenery, filled her young bosom with hope and love for the backwoods adventure in which she had embarked.

The party had been riding on for some time in silence, when the wee voice from the bottom of the sleigh inquired, —

“ Ma, are we 'most there ? ”

“ 'Most where, Timmy ? ”

“ In the woods, where the bears are, — the place where we are going to live,” replied Timmy.

“ Bless your heart, no ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Oakleaf. “ I only wish we were. Why, boy,

it'll take all day to-day, all day to-morrow, and a part of next day, to get there. Longer than that, too, unless your father drives on faster than this. Come, come, Reuben ! if you don't want me to get hold of that whip again, you ' better use it yourself."

" Keep quiet, — don't be impatient, Mrs. O.," replied her husband. " I rather guess I shall drive perty much about as I 'm a mind to."

He whipped his old Johnnies, however, urging them into a brisk trot ; clearly manifesting the fact, that he had a mind to do about as *Salome* had a mind that he should do. Afterwards he thrust his whip among the straw on the sleigh-bottom, beyond her reach.

Arrived at a country tavern, Mr. Oakleaf drove up to the steps, and was going to water the horses.

" Don't you go to doing no such thing," said his wife. " They are too warm to drink."

" Not if we drive right on, and keep 'em moving," suggested Mr. Oakleaf.

" But we ain't going to drive right on. We are going to go in and warm. So you may put your team under the shed as soon as you please, and water 'em by 'n' by."

"No, no, no : 't won't be wuth while to stop so soon. I guess I'll water, — then keep right on, a stiddy jog, till we come to the next public house."

"I guess you won't do no such thing," answered Salome, shaking herself out of the blankets. "If you do, you go without me. Drive fast and stop often, — that's my motto."

"Come, come ; no fooling now, Mrs. O. Be reasonable. I'm going to drive along."

"Drive along if you like. But you'll have to come back after me, if you do. Come, Timmy."

Timmy got up from his nest, looking about him wonderingly.

"Is it to-morrow yet ?" he asked. "Is here where the bears are ? Say, ma ! have we got here now ?"

"Yes, we've got there," cried Mrs. Oakleaf.

"So tumble yourself out of the sleigh as soon as ever you can, Tim Oakleaf. Come, Mrs. Norburn. Now you can drive on, Reuben, or blanket your horses under the shed, — just as you like. You can take 'Tilda with you, if she's a mind to keep you company. I shan't be jealous."

Mrs. Haney, the person alluded to, who sat on the front seat, knew better than to side with Mr. Oakleaf. As Mrs. Haney did, so did Miles Haney, junior, the urchin rolled up in comforters who sat on her feet. Accordingly, Reuben found himself in the minority, and concluded to move on in the popular breeze.

"Why — well — yes, — if you 're all going to stop, stop it is," said he, consoling himself with the notion that he was not yielding to Mrs. O. in any especial manner. "It 's a mere matter of opinion. Opinions differ ; and I give in to the majority."

"It 's well for you that you do, when I 'm the majority," replied Salome, with blunt good humor. "Come, Timmy, what 'ye afraid of?"

"Is that a bear?" asked Timmy, shrinking behind his mother to get out of sight of a little plump, black puppy, that looked like a football on legs, he was so fat and round.

"Yes, and he 'll eat you up, if you don't run in as fast as you can go."

"Youp, youp!" said the puppy, taking refuge between the landlord's legs, and barking furiously.

Timmy stumbled over the threshold, in his

haste to get out of the way ; Rebecca picked him up, and carried him in ; the rest of the party followed, with the exception of Mr. Oakleaf, while the football on legs waddled about the steps, barking and wagging his tail in triumph.

III.

INTO THE WOODS.

THE route of Mr. Oakleaf's party lay through Central New York. They were "emigrating to the West."

At that period, however, this phrase possessed a signification somewhat different from that which it has since acquired. With us the West is a comprehensive term rich with associations of scenery in the fertile Mississippi Valley, of adventures in the region of the Great Lakes, and of romantic life about those rushing rivers whose sources lie beneath Rocky Mountain snows.

Not so with Rebecca and her companions. Of Iowa and Minnesota they had never heard. To them, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois still lay far off, deep buried in the mists of a dawning future. No pleasant groves on sunny

streams of Indiana allured them. No rolling prairie, magnificent with wild, waving grass and flowers like tossing plumes, invited the plough of civilization, with promise of easy crops. The Western Canaan, in their time, was an unbounded labyrinth of woods, into which their way must be hewn with sturdy arms of labor wielding the pioneer's axe.

Reflecting upon the contrast between that day and this, one can with difficulty believe that scarce half a century has elapsed since the furrow of civilization swept through the forests of Western New York, opening to later adventurers an avenue to the broad and beautiful expanse of rich, wild territory lying beyond.

But in February of the year eighteen-hundred-and-twelve, our party of emigrants found the Genesee Valley an **untrodden** wilderness. One vast, shaggy forest brooded like night over the soil which has since been converted into a district of unsurpassed beauty and value. Wild beasts possessed the land **alone**, save only where the council-fires of the red man burned.

Soon after passing the boundaries of their own pleasant township, with its quiet villages and prosperous farms, they came upon more

recent settlements and more extensive woods than any they had yet seen ; and at length, with the exception of a few scattering towns strung upon the line of Western travel, the country exhibited but few marks of the white man's hand. Nor were those signs of improvement that did exist of a very cheerful character. Poor log-huts destitute of surrounding comforts, and occasional clearings picturesque with standing armies of black stumps, struggling, white-capped, above the deluge of snow, presented any thing but an encouraging spectacle to Rebecca and her friends.

During the whole of the first day, the roads were found in excellent condition. But on the following morning Mr. Oakleaf began to feel dismal forebodings on account of his horse-flesh. Not only had large quantities of snow fallen towards the west than in his own neighborhood, but the diminishing amount of travel had failed to make clear and solid roads. These, indeed, finally dwindled to mere sleigh-tracks roughly broken through woods. The merciful owner of Pete and Major pitied the "old Jokers" too much, and whipped them too little, so that very little headway would have been made.

day, had not Salome sat on the front seat, where she could regulate the driving to suit her own ideas of the fitness of things.

It was a hard day's journey for all ; but poor Rebecca suffered more than her companions, being of a more delicate constitution. She was glad enough when the night's stopping-place was reached, although this was only a rude log tavern, constructed on the verge of a lonesome swamp.

Mr. Oakleaf drove up to the low, dark doorway, and stopped. It was a dismal prospect for Rebecca, after a long and wearisome day's journey. In the rear of the house was a stumpy clearing, bounded by a shaggy belt of timber ; while on the opposite side of the road lay the swamp, a trackless desert of snow, bedimmed by the black, stretched arms of gigantic elms, and the straight columns and shadowy tops of tall ash-trees.

The space in front of the tavern from which the banks had been shovelled away was invaded by a small family of lean, shad-shaped swine. Their dirty tracks speckled the snow, and the red of their noses distinguished the door. Presently the landlord, a bearded, unwashed,

ragged man, put out his iron-gray head, the entire tribe set up a chorus of hungry squeals, enough to deafen one.

"Can you keep us over night?" shouted Mr. Oakleaf.

The pigs made no answer, the landlord did not understand the question. He began to kick them away from his legs, and whistle for his dog.

"Here, King!" he cried. "Seek!"

A black cur came bounding from the house. He plunged at the swine as if used to the business, nipping their hams, holding their ears, and shaking their noses, until the whole family fled barking to the stable.

"Here, King! That'll do," cried the iron-gray head. "Come here."

King obeyed, leaping upon his master's legs with the air of a dog that expected praise for brave conduct.

Mr. Oakleaf repeated his question. Meanwhile Salome was scolding Timmy for crying, and Mrs. Haney was pitying Miles, who complained bitterly of cold toes.

"I tell ye," said the landlord. "I can't promise much for lodgings, for the very best."

kin dew will be to give you one spare bed to divide 'tween ye. We don't brag much of our sleeping 'commodations, that's a fact ; but when you come to speak of supper —— ”

At the word, the swine charged down upon the speaker in a squadron, with terrific squeals.

“ Hang the shoats ! Seek 'em, King,” he exclaimed, laying about him with Mr. Oakleaf's whip, which he had seized for the purpose. “ Take hold of 'em ! Seek ! ”

When King put the enemy to flight, the landlord continued —

“ We dew make some pretensions to supper here, — and breakfast tew, for that matter. So if you kin git along with the spare bed and a place on the floor, — you 've got blankets with ye, I see —— ”

“ Don't you keep but one spare bed for travellers ? ” demanded Salome, impatiently.

“ We 've three respectable beds, I 'd have you know,” replied the other, with some dignity, but not disrespectfully. “ When they are all in request for travellers, wife and I and the children sleeps on the floor, and makes nothin' of it.”

“ I suppose we shall have to stop and warm,

and have supper, at any rate," said Salome, moving herself. "How far is it to the next tavern?"

"There ain't another till you git to the mouth of the river. But it ain't a decent sort of a house, like our'n here, you know. Besides, you won't want to travel that fur to-night. It's all woods, — road wus 'n any you've seen yet, — some trees have fell acrost the track tew, they tell me, — say nothing about there being wolves all through these parts. Then it's so dark you 'd be sure to lose your way."

This picture frightened Rebecca.

"O, don't let us think of going any further," she said to Salome. "I can sleep on the floor, or anywhere, — or sit up all night."

"Have you any sort of accommodations for the old Johnnies?" asked Mr. Oakleaf.

"I've got a good stable, you see," — pointing to the long, low hovel to which the swine had fled. "It's remarkable tight, for a log-stable; and if you've any thing to feed your team, — for I ha'n't neither hay nor corn, — fed out the last of both yest'day morning."

Fortunately Mr. Oakleaf carried oats for such emergencies. So the party concluded to pass

the night at the "Western Home," as Mr. Hackler's establishment was named; and in a few minutes they were all comfortably bestowed by the bright blazing fire of the hearth.

Rebecca found the interior far more cheerful than she had had reason to expect. Bar-room and parlor formed one apartment at the Western Home; a bed occupying one corner was also included in its arrangements, but notwithstanding its narrow precincts, the proprietor had managed to make it hold a large amount of solid comfort for chilled and weary travellers.

After taking care of the old Johnnies, Mr. Hackler came in and called a general council of ways and means, to decide on the best manner of providing for all his guests.

"In the first place," said Salome, addressing Mrs. Hackler, "do you got us the very best supper you can scare up. I smell some ham frying, and it gives me such an appetite that I could almost eat one of them pun'kin-splitters squealing at the door."

"Ha'n't you got the supper a going, wife?" asked Mr. Hackler.

"To be sure I have. Minerva's 'tending to it. Now I'd like to know" — in a sour tone

—“ what ’s to be done with all these folks for the night.”

“ Why,” said the landlord, turning to a couple of men who had taken possession of the most eligible corner of the hearth, “ if these ’ere gentlemen will be so good as to give up their bed to the women folks, for ’commodation, I can warrant ’em fair quarters on the floor here, with plenty of blankets, say nothing about the fire.”

The men looked down at the hearth, and smoked away in silence.

“ What do you say, friend ? ” insisted Mr. Hackler, addressing the younger of the two, who possessed a decided advantage over the other in dress and good looks.

“ Just as Brusley says,” replied the traveller, blowing a jet of smoke from his lips.

“ And Brusley ain’t going to give up no bed to no women folks nor nobody else,” growled his companion, in a decidedly negative manner. “ You said you had a bed for us, and I mean to stick you to your word.”

“ Don’t make any trouble for us, sir,” pleaded Rebecca. “ For one, I would just as lief sleep *on the floor, — in any safe place.*”

"Now let me talk," cried Salome, in her positive way. "Let the *gentlemen*" — with an ironical accent — "keep their bed. And don't you go to thinking of sleeping on the floor, Becky Norburn, this night, or any other night, whenever there is a bed to spare, and I can have my say about it. You and 'Tilda shall have the bed, and I'll sleep on the floor. So that's settled."

It was not the first time Rebecca had caught glimpses of a warm, benevolent nature beneath Salome's rough exterior; but this kindness was so unexpected, that it brought tears to her eyes. She thanked her in a voice broken with feeling, declining to accept the offer.

"Now don't you say a word," exclaimed Mrs. Oakleaf. "When I say a thing, I mean it. Timmy, if you don't take your shoes off them andirons, you'll catch it! I sha'n't speak to you again. Mr. Hackler, I wish you would dog them pigs away from the door; their squealing makes me cross as Hagar."

IV.

THE LOG TAVERN.

THERE was authority in Salome's voice, and the landlord complied with her request without a moment's hesitation.

While he was setting King upon the rebel swine, Rebecca observed that the younger traveller took occasion to say something to his companion on the subject of the beds. She judged that he was in favor of giving up theirs, by the sullen manner in which Brusley shook his broad, bushy head, and by his obstinate reply.

"I don't give up my bed to nobody, — not for — himself," she heard him say in a sort of savage growl, holding his short black pipe in teeth. "You can give up your half —"

He added something which brought a flush of indignation to Rebecca's cheeks, while it silenced his companion.

Having put the swine to flight, the landlord reappeared.

"Wife, what do ye think?" said he.
"Shall we see Ironthorpe to-night?"

"See him? to be sure we shall. Ain't it Friday? and did n't he say he would be here?"

"Who is Ironthorpe?" asked the younger of the two travellers.

The question was put in a careless manner; but Rebecca had observed that the speaker started, and betrayed some emotion, at the mention of the name.

"Who is Ironthorpe?" repeated the landlord.
"I thought everybody know'd Ironthorpe."

"Then you can tell me who he is."

"Why, to be sure," with an air of importance. "Ironthorpe is" — hesitating — "is — Ironthorpe. 'Fact, that's all I know about him."

"It 's all anybody knows," added Mrs. Hackler, pausing, with her hand on the kitchen door, which she was about to open. "Ironthorpe is Ironthorpe; and he has promised to be here to-night, and we have promised to set a bed for him. He is a man who keeps his word, and we must keep our'n."

"Then you never heerd Ironthorpe preach?" resumed the landlord, with a patronizing look, addressing his guest.

"Is he a preacher?" replied the traveller, evasively.

"You 'd think so!" exclaimed Mr. Hackler, warming with enthusiasm. "You never heerd preaching, if you never heerd Ironthorpe; and you never 'll want to hear any more, arter you 've heerd him once."

"That 's probable," growled Brusley, like a bear, in his corner. "I heard a man preach once, and I never wanted to hear another."

"But Ironthorpe, — he takes you right off yer feet; he makes your very heart-ring; you forget every thing, when he stands up here, like this ——"

Mr. Hackler assumed an attitude in the midst of the group, and made himself ridiculous by attempting an imitation of Ironthorpe's manner. Salome interrupted him.

"If he could only make me forget them half-stayed, squealing saw-files," she said, alluding to the swine, "I wish he was here now."

"Perhaps he would be willing to give up his bed," suggested Mr. Oakleaf, with a

look at Mrs. Hackler,—“if you should ask him.”

“I ask him ! I ask Ironthorpe to sleep on the floor ? ” exclaimed the landlady, indignant-ly, dropping her red, bare arms by her side. “He would n’t object, I know. He has slep’ out doors, on the ground, with nothing but his blanket, many and many a time, and never complained ; but when he is in my house, he shall have a bed, if I send away fifty travellers. Hark ! there ’s his step now ! ”

The door opened. Rebecca looked with interest to see the man, the preacher, who had been able to excite such enthusiasm and reverence in the rude hearts of backwoods men and women. She was somewhat disappointed at the sight which first met her eye.

A strange-looking figure staggered into the room. It was now dark without ; but the fire-light showed a man fearfully pale, with the exception of a glowing nose, that burned in the midst of his face. He was hatless, and his long, wild locks, sprinkled with snow, had clodded together here and there with icicles, straggled over his ghastly cheeks. His loose hanging garments, spotted and feathered all

over, looked as if they had just emerged from the snow banks.

A strong hand steadied the motions of this pitiable object, and a strong foot trod upon his steps. Rebecca felt a thrill of surprise ; for in the athletic form and eagle features of the poor man's companion, she beheld Ironthorpe, the preacher.

He was a person about forty years of age, of a rather slight and graceful build, indeed, but tall, sinewy, and commanding. The folds of an Indian blanket swept carelessly over his shoulder ; in his belt shone the blade of a hatchet, and a short rifle was slung across his back.

" John Hackler," he said, pushing his companion before him, towards the centre of the room, where the landlord stood staring with astonishment, " you have sown misery, and I have brought home your harvest."

" Yes, John Hackler," added the snow-covered wretch, plunging forward heavily and falling into the landlord's arms, " I 've come back to throw myself upon your affection. Take me, my best of friends," — blubbering on his neck, with maudlin tears. " I am yours for ever ! "

"Furbush!" exclaimed John Hackler, "what 's all this? What 's the matter?"

"Nothing f-f-fatal, I hope. But I 've lost my jug somewhere in the woods, with all the whi-whi-whiskey I bought of you this arternoon."

"Except what you drank, and what you spilled into your bosom with your tipsy hands," said Ironthorpe, hanging his gun and leathern wallet upon a wooden hook beside the door.

"Woe unto them," he added, in a severe tone, —

"Woe unto them that are mighty to-drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink."

"I ain't mighty to drink any thing," sobbed Furbush, hugging his friend the landlord in spite of him. "The leas' drop fl-fl-flies into my head. And I never mingle strong drink," he added, in pitiful accents. "Hackler 'll tell ye I always take my whiskey clear."

"Marcy on us!" cried the landlady, with a distressed look, "what 's to be done with that drunken wretch? What is he here for?"

"Woman," said Ironthorpe, in a low, impressive tone of voice, turning upon the speaker, and bending his tall form over hers, with his long, significant forefinger raised, — "Woman, *him* whom the husband casts down, the wife

should hasten to lift up. This poor wretch I found perishing in the forest. He had lost his way ; he was burrowing in the snow by a rotten log, hunting for his jug ; the night had overtaken him, and in a little time the wolves would have come to finish the work of destruction man begun," — glancing sternly at Hackler. "I heard his tipsy conversation with the rotten log, and went out of my way to find him. I picked him up, and I have brought him here."

"O Mr. Ironthorpe !" exclaimed the woman, overawed, "I don't find any fault, — you have acted nobly, like yourself. But what can we do with the drunkard ? We can't keep him here, that 's sartin."

"If the husband sells whiskey for gold, the wife should give charity without money and without price," answered the preacher.

"You are too hard on me, sir," complained Hackler, having got his helpless friend upon a chair. "I only do what every tavern-keeper does."

"If the angels in heaven should do a wrong thing, that would not make it right, John Hackler. You knew this man's failing. You knew that, with his passion for strong drink, he could

turn pale. "It is death in masquerade. It is the serpent in the garden. Beware of him! Listen not to his counsel, and, as God lives, send him not to sting your brother's bosom."

The landlord was struck speechless. Nor were his guests altogether unmoved.

At that time, drinking was very much in fashion. Spirits were as commonly used as tea. Nobody quarrelled with the custom, either in theory or practice; and especially, nobody thought of going into the backwoods without a well-filled jug. Even ministers of the Gospel drank openly in those days, and often to excess; nor was it an uncommon thing to find women and children attached to their regular drams.

It is probable that the company in the sitting-room of the Western Home had never before heard a word breathed against the safety of drinking and the righteousness of selling strong drink. Hence the electric effect of Ironthorpe's language on ears that had not grown indifferent to the woes of drunkenness, from hearing them catalogued too often.

As if to illustrate the truths the preacher uttered, Furbush reeled out of his chair, and tumbled heavily upon the floor. The sudden

crash startled Rebecca, whose feelings were already wrought up to a painful pitch of excitement. The incident was in itself ludicrous; but instead of making her laugh, it served but to intensify the emotions of awe and wonder with which she regarded Ironthorpe.

The latter placed his blanket with kindly care beneath the drunkard's head, and left him outstretched upon the floor.

“When I turned my back upon towns,” said he, rising, and standing with folded arms and downcast eyes over the intoxicated man,—“when I shook the dust of cities from off my feet, and made a path with hatchet and gun into the heart of the wilderness,—I thought I had left behind me the follies and frivolities of a vain world. I sought the forest, where every thing is earnest, beautiful, and grand. ‘Here, surely,’ said I, ‘the base politeness and lying smiles of society are unknown. Here I shall find men who will leap up to take God into their large, rugged hearts. Here I shall see men whose forms grow like the trees, whose step is like the lion’s, whose language is simple and sweet as the murmur of waterfalls. Here I shall see Nature reign supreme, her

divine spirit filling every living soul with wisdom.'

"I come here," added the speaker, in a mournful tone, lifting his hands and upturning his eye, with an indescribably sad expression, — "I come here and find my brothers fighting against nature. They cut down not alone the trees of the forest. The trees of wisdom, of truth, of love, fall before the axe of civilization. Here, where every thought, every act, every breath the nostrils drink in, should be noble and godlike, men search after mean pleasures and pursue selfish ends; here, where the oaks and maples and pines should teach them pure and sober lives, they scorch up the green grass of their hearts with the fire of rum. O Christ! O Babe of Bethlehem! when shall the world learn holiness from the example of thy lovely life!"

V.

A NIGHT AT THE WESTERN HOME.

WITH these words, Ironthorpe threw himself upon a chair. His hat he placed upon the floor by his side ; and as he sat gazing sadly at the blazing logs, their red light bathing his strong features and lofty brow, Rebecca felt that she had never seen so striking a picture of manhood.

There was an impressive silence of some seconds. Only the roaring fire within and the clamorous swine without filled the interval. The guests looked at each other and at Ironthorpe ; until the click-click of Brusley's short clay pipe on the andiron, as he knocked the ashes from the bowl, broke the spell.

" Who 's a goin' to be a fool ? " he muttered, plunging his hand deep into the recesses of his trousers pocket, and bringing up a huge jack-

knife and a plug of tobacco. "Who's scar't, — I'd like to know? Might's well think of livin' without tobacker, 's without rum."

So saying, he whittled one end of the plug with his knife-blade, and refilled the pipe-bowl with the chips, ramming them down with his little finger.

Ironthorpe gave no sign of having heard the bearish growl. Taking a leather-covered notebook from his bosom, he began to write with a plummet by the light of the log-fire, like one wholly absorbed in thought.

Until now, Brusley's companion had watched the preacher closely, with half-averted face. But at length, seeing him so intently occupied in writing, he turned his full gaze upon him, with looks of undisguised interest.

Suddenly Ironthorpe raised his eyes. They met those of the young traveller, as if attracted by some magnetism. The latter turned quickly away; and Ironthorpe, after regarding him a moment with a troubled expression, sighed, and resumed his writing.

Meanwhile Mrs. Hackler had disappeared. The landlord remained, and presently engaged his *guests in conversation* on the subject of war

with England,—an exciting topic of debate at that time, and one in which Mrs. Oakleaf took great interest. She did not hesitate to favor the company with her ideas, advocating hostile measures in language possessing a certain rude eloquence, which commanded attention. This called out Ironthorpe, who, although opposed to the war from principle, believed that it would serve a good purpose in developing the energies of the people, and in bringing the country to appreciate the blessings of peace.

Mr. Oakleaf was a listener. Although a decided peace-man, he did not see fit to express views conflicting with his wife's. During the debate, Mrs. Haney, who was subject to low spirits, sat crying with despondency. Timmy Oakleaf had fallen asleep in his mother's arms, and Miles was scorching his knees by the fire.

Rebecca sat silent, thinking of her husband, whom she hoped the next day to rejoin. It seemed an age since she had seen him; and her heart throbbed with strange emotions of mingled hope and suspense, as she pictured to herself the anticipated meeting, deep within those awful woods.

Often on the way she had inquired, when

her friends neglected to do so, if any one had seen two men travelling with an ox-team and a load of goods, and driving a couple of cows. On entering the "Western Home," the party had been cheered by the intelligence that Mr. Norburn and Miles Haney had slept there two nights before ; but the young wife was not satisfied with this piece of general information.

She wished to learn all the particulars of her husband's sojourn in the place. She longed to know if he was well, and cheerful, and all that he said and did there ; and she thought of no one who would be more likely to tell her something of interest on the subject, than Mrs. Hackler.

Her womanly feelings therefore overcame the instinctive dislike she had conceived for the red-armed landlady, and at length she summoned courage to seek her society in the kitchen. She entered timidly, closing the rude hemlock door behind her, and stood with an undecided air, waiting for Mrs. Hackler to look up.

The women of Mr. Oakleaf's party had before made an inroad into the kitchen, to get away from the company of the bar-room, but

had found the quarters quite untenable. Such a mean, cluttered place to set a table in, Rebecca had never seen. But at the risk of being in the way, and displeasing Mrs. Hackler, she returned to it, as I have said. It was at an unfortunate time. The landlady was scolding, and Minerva was cross. Both were working with prodigious energy, red and perspiring from exercise and the heat of the fire.

"What do you want?" demanded Minerva, a strong, bony girl, with a scowling face.

"Supper is all ready now," added Mrs. Hackler, without giving Rebecca time to reply, — "if that's what you've come to see about."

The young wife felt her heart sink.

"I only came — because I thought I should like your company better than that of so many men," she murmured, retreating.

The implied compliment touched Mrs. Hackler in the right place.

"Dear me! it is unpleasant, I suppose, — so much smoking and loud talk. You may sit down, if you like."

"I can't have anybody in the way while I'm setting table," exclaimed Minerva, — "and *more 'n* all that, I won't."

Rebecca was more amused than disturbed by this onset.

"Shall I be in your way," — to Mrs. Hackler, — "if I stand here in the corner, on the wood?"

"O no!" said Mrs. Hackler, who liked the young woman's looks, and could not but be kind to her.

"I shall want to be putting some of that 'ere wood on the fire, in a minute," spoke up Minerva.

"O, let me put it on for you," answered Rebecca, with perfect good temper. "I shall be glad to help if I can."

"You 'll only be in the way if you try," returned the girl.

"Minerva Hackler," exclaimed her mother, "if you have over any more of your sass, I 'll give you what you can't buy at the stores, though you be a grown-up girl. Now be careful and carry yourself straight. Do you hear?"

Minerva muttered again, but in a low tone, as if she feared her mother. Rebecca thought it best not to mind her. She began to talk in a pleasant way, and in a little while her sunny

presence had produced a marked effect on the girl's cloudy temper, so that, before calling the guests to supper, she appeared to be at strife with her mother, to see which should give the most information concerning the two travellers with the yoke of oxen and cows.

Rebecca was greatly comforted. Those few minutes she spent in the miserable kitchen made her very happy; and the love she bore her husband served to embalm in her heart, with fragrant memories, her acquaintance with the mother and daughter who told her what time he arrived at the Western Home, how long he stayed, what bed he slept in, and how many pancakes he ate for breakfast.

Hungry as the young wife was, and impatient as she had felt before for supper, the meal was now ready sooner than she wished. She would gladly have waited an hour longer, in order to converse with Minerva and her mother.

It was a sumptuous repast, for the backwoods. Ironthorpe sat at the head of the crowded little table, and said grace in a brief and earnest manner, Brusley drumming with a fork upon his plate the while. The entire company sat down, with the exception of Furbush, who slept

a drunken sleep on the bar-room floor, snoring sonorously.

After supper Rebecca cultivated still further the friendship of Minerva and her mother. This novel experience gave her plenty of food for waking dreams; and long after she had climbed the rude ladder in the corner of the bar-room, and gone to bed in the airy garret above, she was sleepless with happy thoughts of William.

Ironthorpe had voluntarily given up his lodging to the strangers. Accordingly, the women and children occupied the two chamber beds; while the men found quarters on the lower floor.

The two travellers had the bar-room bed; the landlord's family occupying the kitchen. Brusley turned in as soon as the women had fled up the ladder, and in three minutes his snores rivalled those of Furbush, the inebriate. His companion, however, sat by the fire, moodily watching the red brands and spiriting flames, until all else in the house seemed wrapped in slumber.

Mr. Oakleaf lay on a temporary bed at the foot of the ladder, with his great coat for a pillow. But his sleep did not visit. He was

wide awake for an hour ; and at length, when all was still except the breathing of the sleepers, and he sank into a drowse, he was startled by hearing a noise in the stable.

Nothing could have brought him more speedily to his senses. Next to his own personal safety, he regarded that of his darling "old Johnnies." He raised himself upon his elbow and listened.

The noise ceased. No pawing nor kicking confirmed his fears. He felt relieved ; but before lying down again, he witnessed a scene that excited his curiosity.

He saw the young traveller leave his seat by the fire, and with noiseless steps approach the shadowy corner where Ironthorpe lay sleeping, wrapped in his blanket. A touch and a whisper awoke the preacher. In an instant he was upon his feet.

"Do you not know me ? " Reuben heard the traveller say, in a low tone.

Ironthorpe looked at him intently by the fire-light, wringing his hand in silence. He did not smile ; but his brow contracted and his eye was sad and troubled.

The traveller pointed to a chair, and the two

sat down by the hearth. They conversed in whispers ; but Reuben overheard many words whence he judged that the interview was one that filled Ironthorpe's soul with anguish. Several times he saw that strong, stoical man clasp the other's wrist tightly with one hand, while he pressed his own brow with the other, bowing his head over the hearth.

At length the struggle was ended. Ironthorpe was calm and strong. For many minutes he talked to his companion in low, rapid, vehement tones ; then, having finished, he waited for no reply, but arose to his feet, his head almost touching the low chamber-floor. The young man stirred not, but watched him in silence as he wound his blanket around him, slung his wallet and gun over his shoulders, thrust his hatchet into his belt, lifted the rude door-latch, and went out into the chill, solemn night.

After the departure of Ironthorpe, the traveller sat gazing at the fire, with thoughtful looks, for near half an hour. Meanwhile Reuben, excited by what he had seen, and unable to sleep, became impatient.

"Are you going to set up all night?" he asked, raising *himself* on his elbow.

"What if I do?" returned the other, now first observing the face that looked out of the gloom under the ladder.

"Why, I guess I'd sleep better in that bed, — that is, if you ain't going to make use of it."

"You can try it," said the young man, quietly. "But I won't insure your neck if Brusley wakes up and catches you at it."

"Oh!" murmured Reuben, discouraged at once. "I guess I won't try it; I would n't like to disturb any one."

He covered his face with the blanket, and presently his senses were steeped in oblivion. His consciousness returned, when, dreaming that some strange horses were kicking his "old Johnnies" to death with "dire noise of conflict," he hastily started up. Rubbing his eyes open, he beheld the cause of the sounds which had suggested his dream. It was morning; and Brusley, tugging at the straps of his cowhide boots, — which had been baking by the fire all night, after a wet tramp through the swamps the day before, — was hopping about the room and kicking the floor with rage.

VI.

FOREST SCENES.

THE inmates of the Western Home were stirring betimes; the horses were fed, and breakfast was early prepared.

Before sitting down to table, Rebecca asked Mrs. Hackler what had become of Ironthorpe.

"Nobody knows. He goes off in the morning, 'fore any one else is up, often as any way. He 's a stirring man,—a stirring man Mr. Ironthorpe is. He 's gone to preach over the river somewhere, I guess."

Rebecca thought no more of his sudden disappearance until, when once more on their way, Reuben related to his friends what he had seen the previous night.

It was a clear, frosty morning. The dull clouds of the day before had disappeared from the sky. The sun shone with full splendor,

silvering the few light fleeces that floated overhead, white as the snow that lay deep and still beneath the shadowy forest-trees.

How changed was the aspect of the woods since the preceding night ! Beauty and grandeur had dawned upon the solitude, with the day. The swamp was left behind ; and the road wound among stately basswoods, patriarchal oaks, tall, straight hickories, and beech-trees with low, bushy tops. The ground was uneven, but snow filled the hollows, and the track seemed to grow better, instead of worse. Sometimes the sleigh-box grazed the trunk of a sturdy chestnut or maple, the runners striking some prominent root that sloped down under the snow. Now a half-buried log gave the party a jolt, as Reuben drove carefully over it. Then a narrow defile received them, where the trees stood in close array, giving the team so little room, that the whippetrees tore the bark of the trunks on either side.

Rebecca loved to look up at the vast limbs arching overhead. Sometimes the sky was only to be seen through braided branches, with their endless ramifications, which grew finer and finer, until the eye could distinguish only the

ver- faintest shadowy network traced upon the blue
still above. Never before had she been able to dis-
cover such beauty in leafless trees. The
ods infinite variety of form they presented filled
nd- her with continual delight ; and she only wished
the for William's presence and sympathy, to make
the her happiness complete.

tri- Her companions seemed little impressed by
th- the grandeur of the forest scenery. They talked
n- about trivial affairs, which Rebecca found it dis-
ck agreeable to think of at such a time ; and Reu-
e- ben and his wife had frequent disputes.

ly They approached a fork of the road. One
te branch diverged to the right, descending into a
c swampy region, silent, solemn, and full of
a tangled logs that broke the white surface of the
a snow. This was the most direct route to the
s mouth of the river ; and Reuben proposed to
follow it.

"Don't you do no such thing," said Salome.

"I am going the other road."

"O no, now, — I guess not," replied Reuben,
whipping up the team. "It's three or four
miles further, Hackler told me."

"I don't care ; it's a better track. Besides,
I'm going to see the falls that Allan Birch told
so much about."

"Come, come ; no nonsense now. I guess we 'd better go the most direct route. Hi Maj, you old rogue ! Get along, Pete !"

"You 'd better do as I tell you, Reub O leaf, — if you don't want me to get hold of lines. I 'm going by the falls, any way."

Reuben laughed, and said he guessed would go his way ; but on arriving at the top she suddenly seized a rein, and before he knew it, she had guided the team into the left track.

"There ! " said she ; " now you may wade your old Johnnies along as fast as you please. We are going to the falls."

"Well, to the falls it is then," observed Reuben, affecting carelessness. "'Don't make a vast deal of difference, fur 's I know. A little thing to please ye, Mrs. O."

"Any thing to please me, when you can help yourself," laughed Salome.

Rebecca was glad they were going to the falls, which she felt a warm interest to see. But they had not proceeded far, when they came upon a large whitewood limb, that had broken off from the parent trunk and fallen across the track.

"Just as I expected," said Reuben. "I

lucky here 's a place to turn about. I thought we should go the other road, arter all."

"Why the other road?"

"Don't you see? We 're stopped. We can't go around, on account of the logs and deep snow."

"Reub Oakleaf, what a great baby you are! Now if you go to turning your team about, do you mark my word! I will get out and walk to the falls."

"But what can we do?"

"Do!" exclaimed Salome, sarcastically.

"I'll show you."

She seized the lines.

"Here, here, here! What 'you 'bout? You ain't going to drive on to that limb, be ye?"

"Yes, I 'm going to drive on to that limb, *be I*," in a decided tone, spiced with irony. "You are a brave man, Mr. Oakleaf! Perhaps you can learn me a thing or two."

"Stop, stop! — whoa!" cried Reuben, alarmed. "You sha'n't do that, by jolly!" struggling to get the reins. "I'll be master this time, Mrs. O."

"Let go, Reub Oakleaf!"

"No, *no*! I'll drive."

"Go 'long, Pete!"

"Whoa, Maj!"

"I 'm going over that stick."

"You 'll break the old Johnnies' legs. Hold on!"

Reuben had the advantage for once, thanks to the horses. They did not like the looks of the obstacle in the road. Salome drove them as far as she could, when, pricking their ears, and smelling of the limb, they stopped short.

She made a dash at the whip, but Reuben, anticipating an attack in that quarter, flung it out of the sleigh.

"Now hold on," said he.

"Just as long as you please," replied Salome, good-naturedly. "I defy you to turn around between these trees; and as for backing up, — do that if you can."

"A pretty scrape you 've got us into!" complained Reuben. "All this comes from having your own way."

"If you had only let me have my own way, I would have taken horses and sleigh over that little stick in a jiffy."

"Little stick! It 's two foot through."

"Two grannies! Now let me show you *what to do.*"

Salome made a motion.

"What are you after?"

"I'm after the axe, — if you want to know."

"By jolly! you're crazy!"

Reuben thought she wanted the axe to chop the old Johnnies with, in place of the whip.

"Don't be scar't," said she. "I'm going to cut off that stick, you say is two foot through, in just one minute and a half."

"Oh!" exclaimed Reuben, relieved; "I was just thinking of the same thing. Sit still, and I'll chop it off; you could n't, in an age."

"I could n't? I can beat you chopping, any day!"

Salome allowed her husband to operate, however. He got out in the snow, and began hacking away on the limb.

"May I get out, ma?" whined little Timmy. "I want to get some chips to make a house of. Say, — may I?"

An idea flashed upon Salome's active brain.

"Yes, do get out," said she; "and put that whip into the sleigh the first thing. Don't get all over in the snow. Catch hold of the end of the lash, and draw it towards you."

"I don't see it, ma."

"You see that great letter S in the snow, don't you?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, there's where the whip struck. It's only just covered with a light coat of snow. Pinch the tail of the S, and you'll find the end of the lash."

Timmy put out his fingers carefully, and, sure enough, they fished up the whip.

"Now get out of the way!" cried Salome, cracking it. "Look out, Reub! Hold on, girls!"

Mr. Oakleaf, with his back towards the sleigh, had been chopping on the opposite side of the limb, to prevent the chips from flying in the horses' faces. He turned around, and saw at a glance what his wife was doing. He sprang to seize the bridles, but he was too late.

"H'ep! away! g' long!" cried Salome, laying on the whip. "Pete! Maj!"

The horses, started thus suddenly, leaped the log. The sleigh struck it, reared, tipped, hung for an instant balanced in the air, then plunged over on the opposite side.

Unfortunately for Salome's credit, the limb

lay diagonally across the track, in a manner to give the sleigh a dangerous one-sided motion. Had the horses obeyed the bit, and stopped as she designed they should, letting the runners strike the ground easily, all would have been well; but in their fright, they gave a second spring at the critical moment; and Salome, Rebecca, Mrs. Haney, and Miles were hurled out, in a heap together.

The horses started to run, but Mrs. Oakleaf was not a woman to let go the lines at such a time. After dragging her a few paces, they stopped, and she regained her feet, shaking the snow out of her hood and sleeves.

"There, Reub!" said she, "that all comes of your fooling. If you had let me drive over in the first place, 'fore the team got skittish, we would have been saved all this."

She flirled the snow from her face, and hastened to help her companions. There was nobody hurt; but Rebecca, plunged head foremost into the soft bank, and entangled with Miles and his mother, found it difficult to extricate herself. Her garments were full of snow, which, beginning presently to thaw, made her feel any *thing* but comfortable.

It was some time before Reuben said a word. He stood looking in speechless astonishment at the consequences of his wife's exploit.

"A woman's will! a woman's will!" he murmured at length, with a melancholy shake of the head. "This comes of letting you have your own way, Mrs. O."

"It 's the best way, after all," cried Salome, good-humoredly, and with perfect self-possession. "We 've got over the log; there 's nobody hurt, and nothing broke. So don't stand staring there. Come, Timmy! tumble into the sleigh."

"I wonder the musket did n't go off in the fray, and kill the old Johnnies!" exclaimed Reuben, picking up the piece, which had been thrown out. "You ought to have killed one of 'em, to make a clean business of it, Mrs. O."

"I suppose if I had killed myself, it would have been of no consequence," laughed Salome, rather bitterly.

"O, my wooden bowl!" suddenly cried Rebecca, in doleful accents; "it is broken right in two in the middle!"

"Don't you say a word," replied Mrs. Oakleaf, in her off-hand way. "I 've got a wooden

bowl I 'll give you. Don't untie the sheet ; keep it just as it is, or you will let out the things. Come, Reuben ; what are you about ? You ain't going to leave your axe behind, sticking in the log, are you ? ”


VII.

THE GUIDE AND THE CATARACT.

SALOME's energies were fully aroused, and in a little while she had the sleigh, with its cargo and passengers, ready for a fresh start.

Mrs. Haney complained bitterly of the treatment she had received ; Miles took example from her, and snivelled pitifully. But Rebecca, who alone had serious cause to bemoan the accident, made an effort to recover her cheerfulness, in order that Salome might not know how much she regretted the loss of the wooden bowl.

Reuben drove on. And now the roar of the falls, faintly heard at first, grew strong and distinct. A ride of an hour brought the party to a cross track, beyond which the one they followed dwindled to a narrow path struck out *through the snow.*



"Here 's where we turn off to go to the mouth of the river," said Reuben.

"We don't turn off, though, until we have seen the falls," replied Salome. "Hitch your team ; or stay here by the sleigh yourself, while I explore the path."

"Why, woman, you 're insane to-day !" exclaimed Reuben. "There 's no knowing where that path 'll lead you. The lumbermen here have made a good road for us, and we 'd better keep right on, without any more nonsense."

"It would be nonsense to come so near the falls without seeing them, according to my notion, Reub Oakleaf. I won't have it said *I* was such a fool."

"You 'll get lost, Mrs. O."

"Then you can have a good time hunting me up !"

Salome made motions towards getting out of the sleigh.

"Are you coming, Becky Norburn ?" she asked. "I suppose Tilda will prefer to stay behind with Reuben," she added, with sarcasm. "They two don't believe in enterprise."

"We don't believe in turning over sleighs, and breaking folks' bones," replied Mrs. Haney, *in an injured tone.*

"Fiddlestick's end!" exclaimed Mr. Oakleaf. "I shall expect to hear that disordered over for my especial comfort month to come."

"Wait a minute, Salome," said Mr. Oakleaf. "Perhaps that hunter can tell us the best way to see the falls."

"A hunter?" repeated Mr. Oakleaf with a laugh. "By jolly, you're mistaken there."

"There! now we'll be in no danger of getting lost," rejoined Salome. "Your brother, Becky, is Ironthorpe, with his blanketing hatchet, and gun. He ought to know the way to the falls."

"How do you do, sir?" cried Mr. Oakleaf. The preacher's tall figure approached. "The women folks here are crazy to see the falls. I've 'bout concluded to let 'em have them for once. So, if you can give us any chance for getting at 'em, we'll be obleeged to you."

"The falls are worth visiting," said Mr. Ironthorpe, putting aside a bough that crossed his path. "I should not pass so near the falls without seeing them, certainly."

He advanced, and shaking hands with his acquaintances in a friendly, but rather

manner, volunteered to serve as their guide. His offer was readily accepted, and he at once conducted the sleigh into a road by which the lumberers had drawn out logs to the bank of the river.

Reuben, trusting to his guide's experience, drove down near the brink of the precipice, and, blanketing his horses, tied them to a tree. The party then got out, and Ironthorpe, observing a thoughtful silence, walked before them along the bank. Presently he turned, and with a smile, taking Rebecca's hand, drew her towards him.

She started back, with a cry. A wild chasm yawned at her feet. Clinging in fear to her guide, she looked down. Far below swept the strong, slow eddies of a boiling abyss, solemn as a leaden sea, its surface flecked and streaked with tossing white flakes and spanning chains of foam.

"Now look up yonder," said Ironthorpe.

He pointed to the falls. On the edge of the precipice, the rushing rapids seemed to pause an instant to gather force, then, bursting into clouds of snow, plunged with subdued thunders into the gulf.

The scene was one of surpassing beauty. The dazzling expanse of snow, on which the bright sun poured its effulgent rays amid the still, mysterious shadows of the forest trees, served as a fitting framework for so cold and chaste a picture. The broad face of the cataract was bearded with icicles, which hung in vast masses from the ledges above, and from points and shelves of rock jutting out from the sides of the precipice. Some of these clusters looked like mimic cathedral spires, shooting their long, slender shafts far down into the chasm. Some were spears it would have required a giant's power to wield. Here the sloping rocks wore a wide, shining mantle, as of glass, fringed with crystal pendants of every size and form; and there a thread of water dripped from a single icy finger pointed at the rocks below.

A cloud of vapor curled up slowly from the abyss, and, brightening with hues of silver and gold, floated away in the sunshine. All around, the shrubs and boughs of trees were white with the frozen spray, and many a slender branch, weighed down by its coat of mail, seemed dizzy with looking over the cataract's verge, and about to fall.

Rebecca could only exclaim, "O how beautiful! how beautiful!" By her side stood Ironthorpe, solemn and stately, his arms folded across his chest, and his eye watching the light folds of mist which the west wind carried gently into the branches of a graceful elm.

"This cataract is my friend," said he, his severe features softening in the light of a sweet smile,—"it is my oracle. I come here to learn wisdom. To me, these ledges of rock are an altar erected in the great temple of the forest; there is the smoke of nature's incense, soaring to heaven; the Holy Spirit speaks to me in the thunders of the falling water. It says, 'O man! there is a God. O child! thy Heavenly Father liveth. O fainting heart! be of good cheer.' Do you not hear it?"

Something in Ironthorpe's tone, or in his look, or in the touch of his hand, drew Rebecca's heart to him irresistibly. She felt that in his strong, great soul, her own could find sympathy; and no longer considering him a stranger, she murmured in a low, fervent, tremulous voice,—

"I could weep and pray here!"

"The thought is itself a prayer," answered Ironthorpe, with beaming love in his manly face.

“O my child ! may your heart always be pable of such emotion. The spirit is dead sees not a sister spirit to love even in rocks trees. One Soul animates all things. If will but acknowledge God within yourself, will perceive God everywhere ; and unders the language nature speaks, whether in the v of the cataract or in the songs of birds.”

The preacher led Rebecca still further a the narrow snow-path, until the rapids fla in the sun before their cyes. Leaping, f ging, shooting over the ledges, — now tossir wild billows, and again darting in swift, arr currents, — presenting a variety of hues, i a beautiful dark green to silver white, — waters came rushing down in their mad ca: Rebecca viewed them with wonder.

“When my soul is troubled,” said I thorpe, “I love to come and look at these waves. They tell me that, vexed and wo as they are, a broad lake opens its pea bosom to receive them, and they rejoice ir promised rest. ‘And has not the good provided also a rest for the perturbed so they say to my doubting heart. ‘Then above these cowardly fears. Shake off

cares,' they sing to me, 'as we shake off the foam from our crests. Let thy dirges of complaint be changed to shouts of joy and hymns of praise.'

"This morning," continued Ironthorpe, speaking low to Rebecca, "I came up hither bearing a heavy burden of grief. The oaks would not take it from me; the sullen elms refused to share it with me; I looked up at the cold stars in vain for sympathy. The dawn brought me here. I knelt in the snow, and as I offered up my humble prayer to God, the river took my sorrows, and went laughing and singing with them into the gulf. I arose cheerful and strong."

Rebecca listened with deep interest and sympathy; the unusual scenes in which they stood investing Ironthorpe's words with a power and impressiveness that cannot be described.

"I don't know why I talk so to you," he said, after a pause. "But you do not seem a stranger to me. I know when a heart has chords that vibrate with deep and earnest feeling. In you I see a pious soul that has both understanding and charity, — one, too, that is destined to suffer. Perhaps I am your friend because I per-

ceive thunder-clouds in the sky of your future. When they burst, you will remember what I have said to you to-day."

He spoke like a prophet. Rebecca, filled with a vague feeling of awe, knew not what reply to make, but stood gazing in silence at the gleaming rapids.

VIII.

THE LUMBERERS' HUT.

THE rest of the party kept near; but the tone of their conversation was not congenial to Rebecca's feelings at the time.

"Well, well," exclaimed Mr. Oakleaf, in his best humor, "this is a jolly sight, arter all. I don't know but you was about right wanting to come here, Mrs. O. Look, Timmy; be careful," — holding the boy's hand, as he peeped wonderingly over the brink.

"I'm afraid!" exclaimed Timmy, drawing back, and struggling to get away from his father.

Mr. Oakleaf's hand slipped, and the boy plunged backwards into the snow.

"Let me get hold of you, young man," cried Salome, snatching him up. "I'll show you the falls."

"Oh! oh! oh!" bellowed Timmy, don't want to see the falls. O-o-o-o-oh!"

"Mrs. O! Mrs. O!" interposed Reuben, "don't frighten him, — don't now; I would n

But Salome tossed up the urchin in her strong arms, and held him screaming over the precipice.

"Look out there!" ejaculated Reuben, much alarmed as Timmy himself. "Don't so rash, Mrs. O! You'll drop that child!"

"I will drop him, if he don't stop yelling," observed Salome, coolly.

This passage of words between his parents served only to increase the boy's terror. He clung to his mother frantically.

"Good heavens! you're crazy, Mrs. C," said Reuben, seizing her dress, and pulling back. "You'll slip, and go down with him. Come away!"

Salome tossed Timmy from her into the snow.

"You're just like your father," she said contemptuously. "I've as good a mind to hang him over the falls the same way, as ever I had to eat."

Meanwhile Miles and his mother kept timi

behind, looking as if they would much rather be somewhere else.

"My feet are cold!" said Miles, beginning to whimper.

"Stamp 'em, — run around, — get your blood circulating," cried Mrs. Oakleaf.

"I think we 'd better go back to the sleigh," replied Mrs. Haney, in her mournful way.

"We 've been in the snow enough this morning — for once."

This allusion to the catastrophe of which she had been the active cause, provoked Salome to make a cutting remark.

"Come, Reuben!" said she, "do let 's put these babies into the sleigh, and wrap up their tooties, to keep 'em warm!"

"Cold, are they?" asked Ironthorpe, kindly. "Are you cold, too?" addressing Timmy.

"Yes, my feet 'most froze off when ma held me over the falls," lisped Timmy, giving his little head a manly shake, and stiffening his upper lip. "But I ain't going to cry about it, as he does," pointing his finger at Miles.

"Are not you sorry his feet are so much colder than yours that he cries?" asked the preacher, in a winning tone.

He laid his hand with a loving touch against Timmy's round, red cheek, at the same time drawing Miles gently towards him.

"His feet ain't half so cold as mine, are they?" said Miles, who, being an older and bigger boy than Timmy, was ashamed of crying, and wished to excuse himself. "He 'd beller loud enough if they was, would n't he?"

"No, I would n't!" replied Timmy, triumphantly.

"My dear children!" said Ironthorpe, drawing them together, "love one another. There is nothing like love in this world. Come with me now, if you are cold, and I will show you where you can warm your bodies; but you must keep your little hearts warm yourselves. Remember what I tell you, — love one another."

He spoke in tones of such affection, that tears rushed again into Rebecca's eyes. She felt that no one could talk as he talked, who had not himself loved deeply and suffered much.

"This child of yours," he resumed, addressing Salome, "has the germ of a heavenly spirit within his little breast, which needs only to be nurtured by gentle hands. You have a kind heart; you are capable of great strength of

love ; but often your touch is harsh, and the tender plant is bruised."

" Yes, that 's just me," exclaimed Salome, not without feeling. " I always want to drive ahead, and have every thing my own way ; and I suppose I 'm rough enough about it, if that 's all."

Ironthorpe smiled as he laid his hand upon her arm.

" I like you pretty well," said he. " You are just one of those persons we want to make up our society in the backwoods, — a strong, honest, energetic woman. I like you because you scorn lying, meanness, and all hypocrisy. You only need a little more of the spirit of Christ in your heart, to flow out into your life, softening and beautifying the rude works of your hands. As I said to these little children, so I say to you, — LOVE."

" There ! I like the way you talk, I must confess," exclaimed Salome, heartily. " You 're honest, you mean what you say, and there ain't none of that cringing and fawning about you that disgusts me with our ministers at home. They don't no more dare to tell one a plain thing, just as they think it, than they would

dare to step off from these banks. If they 've a pill to give you, they plaster it over with sauce, and lie about it afterwards, and tell you it was n't exactly a pill, but — Pah ! give me plain talkers, I say ! ”

Salome made a gesture of impatience, her countenance at the same time expressing a great deal of solid contempt for the social vices she described.

“ Good,” replied Ironthorpe, leading the way into the woods. “ I like plain talkers, — I like no others. You cannot be too truthful ; but let kindness wing the arrows that fly from your quiver, and let their points be all dipped in love, so that none may ever give pain without leaving the balm of healing in the wound.”

He stepped aside into some bushes, and, seizing the dry limb of a fallen tree, broke it off, and dragged it through the snow. The feat was one that required great muscular power, but Ironthorpe performed it with an apparent ease which surprised his companions.

“ There is our shelter,” said he, pointing to a log hut among the trees, — “ and this limb shall make us a goodly fire.”

“ Come to think on 't, I 'll feed and water the

old Johnnies, while we stop," observed Mr. Oakleaf. "They 're in a comfortable place."

"If you dip up water from the rapids, have a care that they do not drag you in," answered Ironthorpe.

"And don't you go to losing the pail, Reuben," added Salome. "It 'll be just like you now to let it go over the falls."

"Don't you worry about me ; I guess I can take care of the pail, and myself too," replied Mr. Oakleaf.

He returned to the sleigh, and, carrying the horse-pail to the rapids, scooped up, with the utmost caution, kneeling in the snow, fresh, cold water for the team. Having satisfied their thirst, he got out the bag of grain, and the box which served as a portable manger, and fed them there on the wild banks of the river.

Meanwhile Ironthorpe had introduced the others of the party into the hut, and beaten up with his hatchet an abundance of fuel. Although the place was deserted at the time, a few live brands were found in the fireplace, affording facilities for speedily kindling a comfortable blaze. Around this the company gathered, *some standing*, others sitting upon a

bench of the rudest sort, formed of the half of a split log, with saplings for legs, — the only substitute for chairs the hut afforded. The fire was made upon the ground, and the chimney was nothing more than an opening in the bark that composed the roof.

“ This is the temporary abode of lumberers,” said Ironthorpe, heaping the fuel upon the blaze. “ I take possession of it, in their absence, as well as enjoy their hospitality when they are at home. You see ” — turning to Rebecca — “ how some people live in the backwoods. Here is the bed-room, buttery, and kitchen of my friends the lumberers ; here they sleep, here they cook their pork, and here they eat it ; here, too, they sit and smoke their pipes in the evening, telling stories of home, with the eternal roar of the cataract in their ears.”

“ I hope this is not what we have got to come to,” murmured Mrs. Haney, beginning to shed tears.

“ I hope not ; but it may be you will some day suffer for want of a shelter as humble even as this,” answered Ironthorpe, with a pitying smile. “ In either case, forget not that trials and blessings flow alike from the providence of

Him who maketh all things and loveth all. Although you perceive it not, the law of the Lord underlies every seeming accident, every inequality in the fortunes of men, as the firm granite underlies the hills. Then cheerfully resigning ourselves to His paternal care, with the assurance that He is perfect Wisdom and perfect Love, let us neither fear the future, nor repine at present afflictions."

"It is written," said Rebecca, "that all things shall work together for good to those who serve the Lord."

"Ay, and so it shall be!" returned the preacher, his countenance radiating with the soul's brightness. "For if you serve the Lord, you give yourself up entirely to the guidance of Spirit, and Love becomes one sole motive power, like instinct, to lead you into ways of peace. Then shall all blessings fall upon your head, as dews from heaven upon the flowers. It is only when selfish man seizes the sceptre of knowledge, and proudly depends upon his own power to will and to do, scorning nature and the spirit within, that Heaven kindly withdraws its light and ceases to provide. Society is now in that state of inner darkness. Even the

churches hear no longer the still, small voice. Life is external, religion — alas, too often ! — is all external. But experience teaches wisdom ; and weary and sick at length of their estrangement from God, mankind shall acknowledge him as their Father, and trustingly, joyfully, look within for the light of that law which He has written upon every heart."

Only Rebecca appeared fully to comprehend these thoughts.

"I feel it so," she said, earnestly. "I know the Spirit will lead us, if we trust to its guidance ; and the great wish of my life is to be wholly the Lord's. But I am so selfish, — so selfish and so weak !"

"The knowledge of one's own weakness is to him the beginning of strength ; and it is love alone that renders us conscious of the selfish nature of our hearts," Ironthorpe replied, with smile of sympathy. "Blessed are the poor spirit ; for only they can inherit the kingdom of heaven."

At that moment Reuben came into the hut bearing the provision box, which, for want of a table, he placed upon the ground. He proposed to save time by feeding the company while

team was eating ; and (Salome willing) the luncheon was produced. Ironthorpe joined them, but ate very sparingly, as if consenting to share the meal only to typify the spiritual feast of universal love which he preached unto all men.

IX.

REBECCA'S TEASPOONS.

SUDDENLY Rebecca — who stood with a cheerful face by Ironthorpe's side, eating her crackers and cheese, while she listened well pleased to his conversation — changed color, becoming almost as white as snow, and uttered a cry of consternation.

Searching in her dress for her handkerchief, she had discovered that her petticoat pocket was empty. The ball of stocking that had made it so plump was missing.

"O, my silver teaspoons!" she exclaimed, somewhat wildly, in her fright. "I have lost them! What shall I do?"

Instinctively she pressed her garments, and, turning hurriedly, looked along the ground behind her, dropping her crackers and cheese.

"Your teaspoons?" cried Salome, with im-



pulsive sympathy. "If you 've been and lost 'em, it 's too bad! How could you do it?"

"It must have been when the sleigh turned over," suggested Mrs. Haney, with a slight tincture of malice in her tones. "I knew some dreadful thing like this would be the consequence."

"Now do you hold your tongue about that accident, Matilda Haney, if you know what 's good for yourself," exclaimed Salome, in rather forcible accents. "You may scold me for tumbling you into the snow, as much as you please, if you 'll only do it square and fair; but this *hinting, hinting*, as if you was afraid to speak out plain, makes me mad."

She began to look about the hut with Rebecca, — the boys following their example, — as if expecting to see the stocking roll out miraculously from under their feet.

Mrs. Haney smiled bitterly, with an injured, defiant expression, which caused Ironthorpe to regard her with a sad look.

"I am sorry for your loss," he said to Rebecca, who was crying. "But if you have the right *spirit within* you, not the loss of all the

silver spoons in the world could make you lose that treasure."

"I know it is foolish in me to cry," sobbed Rebecca, "but — the spoons were the last thing ma gave me; she had had them made on purpose for me ——"

"No, it is not foolish in you to cry," returned the preacher, in a kindly tone, and with a tender smile. "This regard for your mother's gift is becoming in you. But the spirit of love and forgiveness, — your loss will not rob you of that; so you are less unfortunate than your two sisters here, who have preserved their spoons, indeed, but have lost their temper."

"For my part, I could n't help it," said Salome, with emotion. "I am sorry enough for it; but to have the accident I caused flung into my teeth again, just as I was started by poor Becky's loss, — that was too much. I was quick, but the storm 's all over with. I feel as kind towards 'Tilda as ever, and I confess I don't blame her much, neither. I should n't have liked it if anybody had tipped me over."

Matilda made no reply, but began to pout, and sop her eyes with her handkerchief, rocking herself to and fro with an injured air.

"To be forgiven is a small matter," rejoined the preacher; "but it is a great and blessed thing to forgive."

"Seems to me it must have been careless in you to lose your spoons," observed Mr. Oakleaf. "How could you do it?"

"I don't know. Only this morning," murmured Rebecca, "I pinned the stocking into my pocket, so that I thought it could n't lose out. But something has bewitched it, that's true; and there's no use lamenting."

She smiled through her tears; but the effort at cheerfulness was more affecting than her first outburst of grief.

"I guess she dropped it up in the top of one of them great big ugly trees," whispered Timmy, pulling his mother's dress.

"It went over the falls, more like," observed Miles, with an air of superior wisdom. "How could it get up in a tree?"

"Here! don't make any words with that boy," muttered Matilda, giving Miles a jerk.

"I would n't have such a disposition as that for all the world!" exclaimed Salome. "The idea of learning the children to follow our silly example, *when we are fools enough to quarrell*

That 's as perfect Indian temper as I ever see."

She spoke with good-humored plainness, appearing inclined rather to laugh than take offence at Mrs. Haney's show of ill-nature. But the latter was highly indignant at the supposed insult.

"I should n't think you would say any thing; you was angry first," she retorted, with a spiteful flash of the eye.

"So I was. I'm quick, I know. But my temper is like a thunder-storm,—sudden, and noisy for the time, then all over with at once. The atmosphere is clear afterwards. Yours is like one of them long, dismal rains, that last a week, drizzling, drizzling, drizzling, and making every thing cold and sour. Why can't you get off a little healthy thunder and lightning, and then stop?"

"Learn rather to preserve a perpetual serenity of temper," interposed the preacher. "It is neither wise nor womanly to give way to passion. No heart that knows what love is—such love as Christ taught—can ever feel bitterness, or resentment, or aught but charity, towards any one."

"That hits me, — and good enough for me," returned Mrs. Oakleaf. "But then I never made a profession of religion, like Matilda here, who ought to know a good deal better than I do what Christian love is."

"Don't speak so," pleaded Rebecca, in a whisper, forgetting her own trouble to defend Mrs. Haney. "The best and strongest professors are liable to err."

"Bless you, Becky! if all were like you, I should respect the Church more than I do," exclaimed Salome. "So you 've not a word of reproach for me, on your own account?" she added, as if desirous of changing the subject.

"For what?" Rebecca asked, drying her tears, and endeavoring to suppress her sobs.

"Why, for losing your spoons. It's all my fault. They're buried in the snow, by that ever-to-be-remembered log."

"I think so too."

"Think so? You know so, and you would say so, if 'twan't for hurting my feelings. Now I'll tell ye what; we'll go right back, and find your spoons the first thing."

"I don't see how in the world we can do that," cried Reuben. "We've got to hurry

along. We 've a great ways to drive yet to-day, and coming to the falls has put us back two hours. You must n't think of returning over the road, that 's a sartin case."

"Not to find Becky's spoons?" retorted Mrs. Oakleaf, indignantly. "I guess so! Do you think I'm going to cross the river without 'em? No, Reuben Oakleaf! not if it takes us till next week to get to our journey's end."

Rebecca laughed with fluttering hope, at seeing Salome so resolute. But Reuben raised endless objections to the project.

"It 's a pity about the spoons," he said, — "I 'm as sorry as anybody they 're lost. But 't would be a greater pity to kill the old Johnnies. That would n't be worth while, I 'm sure; now, would it? I leave it to you, Mrs. Norburn."

"Don't answer him, Becky. We 're going back to hunt for the spoons, at any rate."

"It will be hunting, and nothing but hunting, if we do, Mrs. O. Now do hear to reason for once. You had your way about driving over that log — "

"There it is again!"

"I 'd go back, — and risk killing the old John-

nies, too, for that matter, — if there was any certainty about finding the spoons. But as 't is — I'm drea'ful sorry, but —— ”

“ *Drea'ful sorry, but —— !* ” sneered Mrs. Oakleaf. “ Now you know when I say a thing, I mean it ; and I say ” — putting her foot down — “ I ain't going to cross the river without having a faithful hunt for the spoons. You can do as you like.”

Rebecca was much distressed. She would have been willing to walk back alone through the woods to find the spoons, so afflicted was she at their loss ; but almost she would have preferred never to see them again, rather than put all her friends to so much trouble on her account, besides occasioning bitter feelings in more than one heart.

Ironthorpe came to her relief.

“ You need not place the lives of your horses in jeopardy,” he said to Mr. Oakleaf, without smiling, — and when he smiled not, his features were habitually severe. “ Nor shall you ” — to Salome — “ destroy the peace of the majority, as I see you would do, by accomplishing your will in this matter.”

“ There ! ” cried Reuben, triumphantly. “ \

knew the minister would side with me ! That 's plain common sense."

Rebecca's countenance fell. The light of hope faded from her eyes, and they filled with tears of disappointment.

"But plain common sense shall not rob you of the spoons your mother gave you," added Ironthorpe, a gentle smile softening the severity of his features. "I will myself go back and find them."

She looked up with joyful surprise. Hope, thanks, happiness, shone through her tears.

"O, you are so good!" she murmured. "And do you think you can find them?"

"I think I can," replied Ironthorpe, confidently.

There was something in his manner that inspired trust. Rebecca could have danced for joy. But suddenly her countenance changed again. On reflection, she did not like to trouble her new friend to find what must seem to him a mere trifle. She expressed her doubts, saying she could never do any thing in return, she was sure.

"I never do a kind thing in hope of reward," he replied, in a low voice. "Yet if you desire

it, there will be a way opened for you to repay me, some time. Even now I think of a favor you can do me."

"O, do tell me!"

"You go to Allan Birch's settlement, I think some one said?"

"'T was me," assented Mr. Oakleaf.

"Then this you can do. Proclaim to every man, woman, and child you meet, that to-morrow evening I will unfold the word of God in Allan Birch's house. Thither I will bring your lost spoons."

X.

OVER THE RIVER.

HAVING thus settled the difficulty, Ironthorpe departed from the hut, taking leave of his new friends and entering the deeper solitude of the woods.

The party returned to the sleigh, Rebecca, with feelings deeply moved, gave a farewell look at the cataract. Her heart ached with a sense of beauty, and a good deal of the mist arising from the falls seemed to have got into her eyes. She was thoughtful and sad, yet very happy.

She gazed over the side of the precipice. Long, gray icicles, deadened by the warmth of so mild a winter's day, or growing too heavy for their strength, fell from time to time, snapping from the ledges, and shattering upon rocks beneath, or plunging noiselessly into lodged banks

of snow. The spectacle, somehow, added solemnity to the scene. Like the fall of autumn leaves, the dropping of the spears of ice reminded one of death ; and with a full heart Rebecca turned away.

"Come, come, women folks," cried Reuben, having untied his team. "We have n't any time to lose."

He hurried his party aboard, and drove along the high bank of the river. Lumberers and others had made a good track, and, with a little of Salome's assistance, Mr. Oakleaf urged the horses into a brisk trot.

Rebecca's pensiveness was disagreeably disturbed by a suggestion from Mrs. Haney.

"I don't believe you 'll ever see your spoons again in this world. Do you?"

"I can't help thinking Mr. Ironthorpe will find them," replied Rebecca, hopefully.

"That may be," observed Matilda, in a significant tone.

"Then why won't I see 'em again?"

"O, I don't say but it 's possible you may. Though I doubt it."

Rebecca was mystified. Her simple, trusting heart could not conceive of so wild a sus-

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picion as that at which Mrs. Haney darkly hinted.

"Bless you," cried Salome, "don't you see? She doubts Ironthorpe's honesty! She thinks if he finds the spoons he 'll keep 'em!"

"I did n't say that," muttered Mrs. Haney, in a sullen tone.

"And I know she could not mean so unjust a thing," rejoined Rebecca. "You've only to look at Ironthorpe, and hear him speak, to believe in him."

"O, by jolly!" suddenly screamed Timmy, who sat in the fore part of the sleigh-box with Miles, "he's broke my leg twice! He keeps kicking it with his foot."

"What are you about, young gentleman?" demanded Mrs. Oakleaf, who, sitting on the front seat, had observed Master Haney's hostile demonstrations. "Shall I pull your ears?"

"Ma! don't let her," cried the cowardly Miles. "Ma! ma!"

"Sec," said Salome, turning to Matilda, "you've done it at last. Miles never would have thought of commencing on Timmy, if you had n't encouraged him."

"I'm sure of one thing, — I did n't begin

any quarrel," replied Mrs. Haney, stubbornly. "And I don't think Miles has killed Timmy, neither. You need n't make such a fuss about it; 't ain't quite so bad as tipping us all into the snow."

Salome gave expression to her resentment in a novel way. She seized Reuben's whip, and visited Matilda's offence upon the innocent hide of the old Johnnies, whipping them into a run.

"There!" she exclaimed, yielding at length to her husband, who was struggling to regain the mastery of the team; "that 's over with. I ain't going to get put out with you again, 'Tilda Haney; you ain't worth it."

In this manner the party passed out of sight of the falls. All this occurred—the reader should remember—some more than forty years ago. Visit the spot to-day, and you will observe a change which almost realizes the Arabian fables of palaces built by Genii in a night-time. The forest has disappeared, and in its place throbs the mighty heart of a populous town. Rochester reigns a queen city, throned upon the seat of the cataract.

But the cataract itself has dwindled to comparative *insignificance*. The Dalilah hand of

Civilization, reaching far up to the river's head, has done much to shear away those flowing locks of strength that streamed upon the hills. And in the noisy prison-walls of toil and trade, the giant has been tamed, and taught to grind, to weave, and to spin.

How great the change 'twixt then and now ! The city, alighting like an eagle upon that spot in the wilderness, broods with its broad wings over both banks, its feet of piers spanning the rocky bed of the stream.

But in the year 1812 our friends found not even a bridge ; and, unable to cross where multitudinous wheels of busy life rattle and thunder now, they drove down contentedly to the mouth of the river, and went over on the ice. Travellers do not so to-day.

XI.

ALLAN BIRCH'S SETTLEMENT.

OUR little party reached Allan Birch's house in the evening. Beyond this point there was no sleigh-track in the direction they travelled : only a single path was beaten out through the snow.

Here Rebecca found the load of goods, with which her husband and Miles had been unable to proceed further ; but William she did not find.

"Yesterday," said Allan Birch, "him and Haney unyoked the oxen, and drove 'em with the cows, single file, through the woods, over to Sol Pangborn's ; and I have n't heard from 'em since."

It was a sad disappointment for poor Rebecca. But she did not complain, nor shed more tears *than she could help* ; for she knew that

William would have hastened to meet her, had it been in his power to do so. She was quite sick at heart, however, notwithstanding all her efforts to be cheerful, when she accepted her old neighbor's hospitality, giving up all thought of following her husband that night.

"I don't much think either him or Miles will be here this evening, it 's getting so late now," remarked Mrs. Birch, busying herself to prepare supper for her old friends. "He was in hopes you 'd be along in time to go on to Pangborn's horseback to-night. But I guess it 's 'bout as well you 've stopped here."

If a hearty welcome, and great joy over their coming, could have reconciled Rebecca to the delay, she must have been reconciled. The interior of Allan Birch's log house presented a brisk and happy scene. The pioneer's eldest son took care of the horses, and Allan himself, his tall, large, bony frame inspired with a schoolboy's activity and animation, devoted himself to making the company comfortable. The women chatted, the men laughed and joked, and the children's faces brightened in the light of the roaring log fire.

Beautiful red slices of fresh meat hastily cut

from a ham of frozen venison — of his own shooting, Allan said — were soon broiling on the old-fashioned gridiron over a heap of glowing coals. In another part of the great chimney hung the teakettle over a fine blaze; while under the forestick, by one of the primitive hardheads that served in place of andirons, a nest of potatoes were roasting in the hot embers.

In the midst of so much stir and bustle, talk and action, Rebecca soon forgot her disappointment. She became interested in Mrs. Birch's housekeeping experience, which that good lady told with a great deal of humor for her gratification, throwing out many useful hints on the subject.

Salome in the mean time joined the men in their talk about taking up land, building, and making clearings. Matilda's was the only sober face in the group; and she scarcely spoke, except to complain of her husband's absence.

After supper the men lighted their pipes, and Mrs. Birch made preparations for a bowl of hot whiskey toddy.

"I don't know 's I shall dare to drink any," remarked *Reuben*, laughing, "arter the lectur'

your Mr. Ironthorpe give us on the subject of Hackler's tavern."

"He 's opposed to the use of sperits, I remember," replied Allan Birch, tipping back on his stool, and crossing his legs. "But it don do me any harm, fur 's I know. I never drinl though, 'cept on extraordinary occasions. We must have something to moisten our throats when we meet old friends, and have no end o talking to do."

"Perhaps 'twould be a good thing to invit Ironthorpe himself to take a drop 'fore he begins his preaching to-morrow night," suggested Mr. Oakleaf, warming in anticipation of the toddy.

So saying, he followed Allan's example, tipping back, and resting his head against one of the big logs that formed the side of the house with his feet elevated upon the chair-round.

"No, no," said the pioneer, "Ironthorpe don't need any extra excitement, when he speaks. All he wants is a few attentive ears to hear him. That reminds me, Enoch," to his eldest son, a lad of twelve, "you must start 'arly in the morning, and go and tell Mr. Kingsley there 's to be preaching here in the

evening, so that he can get word to his neighbors in good season. What do you think of this for a meeting-house, Rebecca ? ”

“ It is very small.”

“ Small ? That reminds me of as long ago as I can remember — ”

And Allan Birch rambled off upon one of his favorite stories, which he was always inspired to relate when toddy was in contemplation.

In the midst of the narrative, Rebecca heard feet coming along the snow-path without. Her heart bounded, and her face lighted up with hope.

“ Is that Norburn or Haney coming, think ? ” asked Reuben.

“ I hope it ’s both of ’em,” cried Allan Birch, pitching his chair forward, and pointing his pipe-stem at his ear, as he listened. “ They ’re just in time for the grog.”

The latch-string was pulled, and the door opened. Rebecca, having sprung eagerly forward to meet William, recoiled, disappointed and abashed. In the bearded face, and shaggy exterior of the new-comer she recognized Mr. Brusley.

“ I ’d like to know where I ’m driving to,”

said the traveller, slamming the door, and stamping the snow from his feet. "Is this 'ere the road to Jerome Kingsley's?"

"If you come from the east, this ain't the road to Jerome Kingsley's," replied Allan Birch. "Give the stranger your stool, Enoch. Sit down, sir."

Brusley looked bearishly around, but seeing only four legitimate chairs in the house,—or rather, four rudely-fashioned frames with splint-bottoms,—of which Reuben occupied one and the women the other three, he accepted the stool, and established himself upon it in the midst of the circle.

"Then I 've lost my road," he growled. "I come to two tracks in the woods, and took the left one, as the scoundrel lives over the crick. told me to do."


"You should have taken the right, to go to Kingsley's."

"Seems so; for I 've run ashore in the snow-drifts, and near 's I can make out, there ain't no road south of here."

"Have you a team?"

"A hoss 'n' cutter."

"Are you alone?"



"Yes, — as I al'ays happen to be when a companion would be a help. A chicken-hearted young fellar come with me as fur as Hackler's, but this morning he flunked, and said he was going back. I'm out here on business, looking up the best spot for making improvements. He j'ined me on some Tom Fool's arrant, I don't know 'zactly what. But that 's nothing here nor there. Can you keep me over night?"

"I never did such a thing yet as turn a stranger from my door," replied Allan Birch, taking down the tin lantern from a log over Reuben's head, and opening it. "We're more than full to-night, as you see; but I can find a place for you on the floor, and a corner for your horse in the stable, if you stay. We can give you a supper at any rate."

"I can sleep anywheres," answered Brusley. "But most I think of just now is supper. I want some meat victuals, if they're to be had."

Allan Birch lighted the little stub of a tallow candle which he found in the socket, and gave the lantern to Enoch to hold, while he pulled on his boots and coat.

After he had gone out with Brusley, to take care of the horse, Salome exclaimed, —

"That fellow ought to have been left alo to find his way through the woods. I shou have told him so, if it had come handy. I sh let him know what I think, at any rate, wh he comes in."

Mrs. Birch, who had gone to work to co the stranger's supper, looked up in surprise.

"Who and what is he?" she asked.

Salome told the story of the night at Hacer's tavern.

"He would n't even give up his bed to Tilda and Becky," she repeated, with indignation; "but now he can sleep anywhere!"

"I declare," exclaimed Mrs. Birch, "I sh almost begrudge him his supper and a place the floor! I'm sorry you told me. I do like to feel so."

"It seems to me I would take more pains give him a good supper, and comfortable lodgings," put in Rebecca, in her sweet, gentle voice.

"I would n't!" spit out Mrs. Haney, spitefully. "I'd turn him out doors, and done w him."

"Good for evil will be the best way, I know observed Salome,—"if you're only equal

it. I confess I ain't. If I could just pounce upon that Brusley, and give him a piece of my mind first, then perhaps I could be a Christian to him."

"The best of the joke, arter all," said Reuben, "was his inviting Becky to ride with him, this morning. I thought that was showing a face, arter what had happened. He was good as preserves, and promised to bring her all the way in his cutter, if she 'd agree to it."

Rebecca blushed, and said she did not know that Brusley meant any thing disrespectful.

"If he acted purely from benevolent motives, why did n't he accept my offer?" cried Salome. "After Becky had refused,"—to Mrs. Birch,— "I thought I 'd see if he 'd like my company, and asked him. You 'd better believe he looked glum at the idee, for he knew I would n't be so pleasant a doll to fill one side of his cutter."

There was a general laugh, in the midst of which Reuben put on his hat to go out and say good night to the old Johnnies, and see that they were left in safe and comfortable quarters.

The children *meanwhile* were put to bed on

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the floor in one corner, and the table was for the stranger. Mrs. Birch, influenced by Rebecca's charity, got him a good supper; afterwards the hospitable Allan shared with him his pipes and his whiskey-toddy.

XII.

A SABBATH IN THE BACKWOODS.

ALLAN'S house boasted of but one room ; that, however, was quite a spacious one for the backwoods ; and Mrs. Birch had invented a simple method of dividing it temporarily into two rooms, by hanging blankets across from side to side.

In this manner she prepared separate sleeping apartments, one for the men, who were to lie on the floor, and the other, which contained one bed, for herself and her female friends.

The women retired while the men were still merry over their toddy. These by their talk and laughter kept Rebecca awake for a long time. Then she heard wolves howl in the forest, and trembled for William's safety ; for she thought his anxiety to meet her might have tempted *him into the woods* at a late hour,—

he might have got lost, — and no end of which she could imagine might open their to devour him.

At length she slept; and on awaking morning twilight surprised her. There only one window, set with a single antique in Allan Birch's house, and that poured light full upon Rebecca's bed. She started and hastened to look out of it, thinking William might be seen somewhere coming the snow.

No William cheered her sight, and the view looked so cold and gloomy, that she hoped would not think of travelling through them after sunrise. Their dreary aspect made her shudder, and she hurried on her clothes. The men were already up and out; and in the apartment she found the fire blazing superbly.

Rebecca's first housekeeping experience in the backwoods was in helping Mrs. Birch make breakfast that still Sabbath morning. They had learned with how few kitchen utensils, in the midst of what inconveniences, one can get along, and even live quite comfortably, when a good heart and a clear head are brought to work.

During breakfast Mr. Norburn arrived. He burst into the room, and put his hands on Rebecca's shoulder, as she sat with her back towards the door, before she knew that he was near.

"O William!" she articulated, turning and starting up.

That was all. Her happy face said the rest. She clung to him, and looked up with tender eyes and rosy cheeks into his joyful countenance, quite forgetful of everybody else.

"So you 've got along," cried William, in fine spirits. "Keep your seat, Enoch; I've been to breakfast. You 'd better finish your meal, Becky."

Rebecca sat down; but it was laughable to see her attempt to eat. With her food raised half-way to her mouth, she would stop to listen to her husband, and then put down her knife and fork mechanically, quite unconscious what she was doing.

"I wanted to be here to meet you last night," said William, standing with his back to the fire.

"But what do you think, Becky? I've hired out to Mr. Pangborn; and as I could n't afford to lose much time, I began chopping for him *yesterday*."

"Why did n't you come over in the evening?" asked Allan. "We thought of you when we made the toddy."

"And when we drank it," added Reuben.

"I supposed you would be crowded; and talking the matter over with Miles, we concluded 't was best to wait till morning."

"And why did n't he come with you?" asked Matilda, mournfully.

"To tell the truth, he slept late, and had not been to breakfast when I came away."

William would not have spoken so carelessly had he known the effect his words would produce on Mrs. Haney. She shed tears, and expressed herself bitterly on the subject of her husband's conjugal affection.

As soon as breakfast was over, Brusley departed, taking Enoch with him in his cutter. Allan and Reuben went to the stables; and Salome and Mrs. Haney assisted the hostess in clearing away the table. It was then that Rebecca sat down in the corner with William, and made him relate his adventures, with additional particulars, over and over again.

In return, she told him all that had happened to herself, laughing and crying simultaneously

over that part of her narrative which touched upon the silver teaspoons.

That Sabbath proved one of the happiest days in Rebecca's life. William's animation inspired her with fresh courage for the life upon which she was entering. Her mind was thus prepared to enjoy every novel scene that met her eye. Her soul was full of love, and even those portions of the Gospels which she already knew by heart opened deeper and more spiritual beauties than she had ever before discovered, as she read them over with William by Allan Birch's log fire. Yet how often, in the midst of all, she thought of her mother and her old home, with tears of tenderness gathering in her eyes!

She thought a good deal about her lost teaspoons, too, and asked William more than once if he supposed Ironthorpe would be able to find them. He smiled at her simplicity, but told her confidently he hoped so; and that seemed to encourage her very much.

Miles Haney made his appearance in the forenoon, and found Matilda in a melancholy state. She reproached him for not coming before, and pouted for hours over his neglect. How Re-

becca pitied the poor fellow ! But, like c accustomed to such scenes, he did not app at all disconcerted by his wife's disagreea ways. He joked and laughed with the othe and told the children some bear stories he l heard or invented, now and then glancing go naturedly at Matilda, to see if she had recove her temper.

The Birches agreed to keep Reuben's fan until he could build ; and Mr. Norburn : Miles had already made arrangements to cupy corners in Mr. Pangborn's house. A dinner they talked about carrying their wi through the woods to their temporary home.

" I tell you what," spoke up Mrs. Bir " You all want to hear Ironthorpe to-night —

" And Becky wants to see the color, of teaspoons," laughed Miles.

" Why not, then, let the women folks stop h till morning ? "

" Miles and I have to go to work in the mc ing," said William.

" Now let me fix it," put in Salome, in positive way. " You shall all stop and h Ironthorpe ; afterwards you and Miles can back to Mr. Pangborn's, and leave Becky :

"Tilda to sleep here. Reuben can go over with 'em in the morning."

So the matter was settled, — not entirely to Mr. Oakleaf's satisfaction, but in a manner to promote the greatest good of the greatest number.

Supper was delayed that evening for Ironthorpe; but he did not keep his friends waiting long. Although he had preached already twice that day, and travelled many weary miles on foot; at an early hour his tall figure entered the low doorway of Allan Birch's house. His countenance looked sad and weary, in the rays of the chimney fire, as he glanced around on the company assembled.

Allan hastened to take his wallet and gun, and Mrs. Birch relieved him of his hat and blanket.

An old-fashioned rocking-chair, belonging to Rebecca, which had come with the load of goods, and had been brought in for the occasion, was placed for him before the fire. He looked at it, and paused a moment, with the expression of one endeavoring to recall to mind some vanished thought, then mechanically sat down.

Until now he had not spoken, except to murmur a half-audible "Good evening," as he entered. Rebecca regarded him with interest. Once she caught his eye, but he gazed at her abstractedly, with no sign of recognition. For a minute or two he sat with his head incline thoughtfully forwards, rubbing his forehead and temples with his palm. Then suddenly he looked up, his austere features brightening with intelligence.

"You are very tired, Mr. Ironthorpe," observed Allan Birch, who was the first to break the silence.

The preacher called for a cup of water.

"Wouldn't he take a drop of spirit in it, think?" suggested Mrs. Birch, in a whisper.

Ironthorpe, overhearing, shook his head with a melancholy smile. After drinking, he got up and — his manner changing entirely — shook hands with every person present. Rebecca was relieved and rejoiced; for he was now once more the same gentle, loving spirit she remembered with so much respect and sympathy.

"No," said he, answering Allan's first remark, "I am not tired. I feel quite fresh. God has given me strength for my work."

His appearance did not belie his words. All that expression of weariness his features wore on entering had disappeared; and Rebecca thought he looked even more active and vigorous than the day before.



XIII.

PREACHING IN THE WILDERNESS.

THE preacher glanced around the room, his eye fell upon his gun in the corner, and wallet hanging over the muzzle. He took down the latter, and, seating himself once more by the fire, opened it in the light.

Rebecca's heart beat with hope and suspense.

"Before supper," said he, smiling, "let me give this child something to help her appetite."

She extended her hand eagerly, with a suppressed cry of joy, as he held out the stocking-ball, containing the memorable spoons.

Rebecca could have danced and clapped hands ; but she contented herself with shedding a few happy tears on William's arm, while friends crowded around with their congratulations.

They sat down to table, and Mrs. Birch dispensed her hospitality to a happy group. Ironthorpe was in his best humor. He told where he had preached, and how far he had travelled on foot since morning, astonishing even the hardy Allan by his powers of endurance.

"My strength is not all of myself," said the preacher. "In the woods, some two hours since, I began to feel faint. My limbs refused to carry me, and I was on the point of throwing myself down in the snow. But I did not complain. I said, 'O Lord, it is my sole desire to do thy will, whether I go on, or fall upon the wayside. Let thy hand guide me. I am content.'"

"Suddenly I found myself walking through the woods with such ease that it seemed almost entirely without any effort of my own. Then I became lost to external objects; but the Holy Spirit was present in my soul, breathing comfort and peace, and opening higher heavens of truth than had ever yet been revealed to my vision. Where I was I scarcely knew, until I found myself seated by your fire. Then the Unseen Power withdrew, taking away all my weariness and pain, if I had any, and leaving me fresh and strong."

Although Ironthorpe had the reputation of being an enthusiast, whose reason was sometimes overshadowed by his great religious zeal, such a statement as he now made in his calm moments was calculated to impress the most sceptical of his hearers.

Meanwhile neighbors came in. The zeal manifested by those rude backwoodsmen, who walked miles through the snow, to return again on foot the same night, in order to hear of the Gospel in the wilderness, shames the apathy of those languid church-goers who attend upon preaching only when and where ease and fashion invite them. How many of thy neighbors, dost thou think, candid reader, could be prevailed upon even to enter a mean log-house, containing but one room, one door, and one window, a slab floor under foot, and a roof of poles and bark overhead, to listen to the word of God,—yea, even though the lovely Jesus himself, in his humble garb, should come once more and break therein the bread of life? Would the churches rush rejoicingly to acknowledge their Master, and receive spiritual food at his hands? Nay, not only would his *plain teachings* offend, but the world's piety

has, I fear, become too respectable and elegant a thing to admit of so free and unpopular a movement.'

Something like this Ironthorpe said, when he stood up in the midst of the group, and blessed them all.

"I cannot number you even by dozens," he continued. "But I thank God that twenty souls have been gathered together beneath so lowly a roof this night, to call upon the Lord. O my brothers! O my sisters! believe me, no one who calls upon his name with a contrite heart and a soul hungering for truth shall call in vain. Blessed be the Holy Spirit, that disdaineth not the meanest roof, the humblest garb, the most abject and despised estate, but maketh even the beggar whose heart is upright and pure richer than princes clad in purple and gold.

"In the deepest, truest sense," said Ironthorpe, growing more and more in earnest, "there is no difference in the fortunes of men. To the rich, fine houses and grand company are no more than the lowliest homes and most familiar, plain old friends to the poor. Your joys are as sweet as a monarch's. The hours of your days flow with as full-freighted blessings

as any man's. Worldly prosperity can in reality neither add nor take away.

"Only one thing varies the lot of mortals. Poor or rich, with fame or without, honored or ignored, the heart's capacity for happiness remains ever the same, until it receives accession from *within*. The Spirit alone enlarges and ennobles. Can you tell me," — Ironthorpe singled out Rebecca with his finger and with his eye, — "can you tell me, now, who is the happiest man?"

The unexpected appeal, calling attention to herself, startled her, and made her shrink from the full light of the fire, down by her husband's side. But the thought came to her, and she spoke it timidly, —

"He who loves most."

"That answer came from the Spirit within!" exclaimed Ironthorpe, with enthusiasm. "God is love; and he who has the brightest spark of the divine principle in his soul, is the happiest among angels or men. And may not the slave love as much as the master? Does not the peasant enjoy the right to pour out the waters of his full heart equally with the lord? I tell you, O my friends! that love is the door of

heaven, nor can a man steal in by any other way.

“What then hinders you from loving now, — from opening your hearts to receive the divine influx, — from entering to-day this gate of heaven? In one respect you enjoy a great advantage over the rich and honored of this world. Simplicity, humility, afflictions, — amid these hedge-rows lies the path leading up to that Calvary of SELF-DENIAL on which must be crucified the pride of every soul that would see the light of life eternal.

“The great error of which I find you guilty — you, brother man, and you, sister woman — is that of postponing your happiness to a distant future. You look forward with impatience to the time when fertile fields shall blush where now the forest glooms, and fine farms and houses take the place of your log huts. Then your wishes will be crowned; then your cup of happiness will be full to the brim! But remember that with every tree that falls, with every blade of grass that springs, a grain of sand passes through the hourglass of time. The glorious figure you behold far off on the hills of *Hope*, clad in the morning's soft golden

light, will fade and fade as year by year you climb, until, in the afternoon of life, the purple mists of distance disappear, and reveal the bent form, and bald, wrinkled forehead of Old Age.

“Believe me, you will never see happier days than the present. In your log huts all the graces may dwell. Learn, then, to make life one grand eternal Now. Do your noblest deed, think your noblest thought, to-day. In your humble dwellings you may shame princes by a royal contempt of every base desire. Act as if the integrity of nature depended upon the truth and manliness with which you face your fellow-man, and the best and wisest philosopher the age affords shall be better and wiser for the air you breathe into the world. O, do not, as many do, shuffle and deceive to-day, meaning to serve God to-morrow, or next week, or next year, when you can afford it better. That time will never come ; but deeper and deeper into the mire you will sink, as long as you turn your backs upon the sun of truth, to follow those false flames which flit in the evening damps along the swamps of selfishness.”

Such were the thoughts that flowed out spontaneously from Ironthorpe's heart. Meanwhile

he held in his hand an old hymn-book, from which, on arising, he had set out to read. Concluding his remarks, he gave out a hymn; and all present joined in singing it, two lines at a time, as he read it off in half-stanzas by the fire-light.

Two gentle voices seemed to lead the rest, their clear tones blending sweetly, and floating above all less harmonious tones. They were those of William and Rebecca, who from the depths of their own hearts filled that rude log-house with the soul of divine beauty and love, breathed into music.

Afterwards Ironthorpe made a brief and fervent prayer. This ended, he took his text from the twenty-seventh verse of that wonderful fourteenth chapter of Luke, and explained in a simple manner what it was to bear the cross of self-denial and follow Christ.

He stood, tall and commanding, near one side of the room. Before and around him was his audience, — a little handful of rude back-woodsmen, with their wives and children; some sitting, others standing, and a few reclining on the floor. Lamps there were none in Allan Birch's house; and candles were too scarce an

article to be used on the occasion. Only chimney fire threw its red gleams on the picturesque scene, lighting up the low roof poles and bark, the massive side-logs, pain with fantastic human shadows, the scanty future, and the faces of the preacher and hearers.

At first Ironthorpe's manner was rather tacit and reserved. He spoke with ease, but fluently. By and by, however, the very spirit of eloquence seemed to take possession of him. His words came glowing from his lips, like burning coals. He used the freest, most impassioned gestures at times, appearing to abandon himself entirely to the torrent of thought that bore him along. Now bending eagerly forward, now pouring out a flood of low, vehement words, then rising and turning to this side and that with rapid, abrupt movements; at one moment all fire and strength, and the next all tenderness and love,—dropping gentle thoughts like dew from his tongue, his face upturned with a spiritual expression, and his eyes full of a most tearful radiance; such was Ironthorpe when moved by his great theme.

I have heard old people, who were pres-

describe the effect of his preaching. They say they never witness any thing like it now-a-days. The manner in which Ironthorpe seized upon the hearts of his hearers, and swayed them to and fro at will, as the wind tosses the forest boughs, seemed almost miraculous.

Nor was his preaching merely a wild exhortation. Although full of poetry and fire, it possessed a solidity and strength which carried conviction to the coolest and most prosaic mind.

When he ceased, and called down the blessing of God upon the rapt faces upturned to him by the light of the log fire, some shed tears in silence ; others murmured their admiration ; a few looked down with a troubled expression, while the eyes of others beamed with joyful trust.

But of all who had listened to his words, there was scarce one who did not deeply feel their truth, — who did not earnestly desire and strongly resolve to follow the Christ of love he preached, and shed around even the humblest home in the woods some little fragrance of a true and holy life.

With many, this generous warmth of soul was destined soon to cool, and the slimy rocks

of selfishness too speedily reared their deformed fronts above the purifying waves that overflow them for a time. But the most careless cannot thenceforward pass through life without being often and often turned aside from unworthy acts and base desires, by haunting memories of that night, which followed, like attendant angels, to warn, and to deliver from evil.

XIV.

THE LITTLE CARAVAN.

THE men who had come from a distance stopped to talk a few minutes after the conclusion of the sermon, then departed, to return to their homes. With the rest went William Norburn and Miles Haney. Rebecca and Matilda were left to pass another night under Allan Birch's roof.

On the following morning the two last set out early to follow their husbands. Ironthorpe, who had remained over night, volunteered to accompany them through the woods, and assist in moving such articles of housekeeping usefulness as they would need most, on taking up their temporary abode in Mr. Pangborn's house.

One of Reuben's horses was harnessed to a hand-sled loaded with a laughable miscellany of kitchen *utensils*, provisions, and bedding.

This precious pile of goods was so Reuben was obliged to walk behind as it by the stakes that confined it within row bounds.

Young Miles rode old Maj, who drove Pete was devoted to the use of Reb Mrs. Haney, who rode double, without or bridle, the former holding by the mane, the latter embracing her companion's waist. Ironthorpe led the horse, trailing upon Reuben's heels, who preceded the lead.

There was a good path, but the snow so deep that Rebecca could touch it with her hand as she sat upon the horse. It was all woods — all the way.

A few months ago, as I travelled the same ground, by a broad, smooth, beautiful-fields on either side, and few houses scattered all along, I could hear the testimony of the old settlers, with that all this noble picture of civilization been painted on the rough canvas of wilderness in less than fifty years.

'It was a lovely day. The sky was blue and warm ; the glittering snow blushed

and streaks among the tall, still trees, where the sunlight struck down ; the icy crust snapped and fell from the limbs overhead.

Here and there, white rabbits went hopping over the snow, and disappeared in the hollows. Squirrels came out of their warm nests to replenish their failing winter stores, by digging down to the roots of beech-trees, chestnuts, and hickories, for buried nuts. Now and then, as the little caravan passed on, one of the nimble animals ran chippering up the bark of a large trunk, and chattered at them from some safe crotch above.

“ Why don’t you shoot ’em ? ” asked Mrs. Haney, as Ironthorpe pointed out the squirrels to his companions.

“ Why destroy the innocent creatures ? ” he replied.

“ I should think it would be sport,” answered Matilda.

“ It is never sport for me to take life from the least of God’s creatures,” said the preacher, mildly.

“ What do you carry a gun for, then ? ”

“ To serve me in the hour of need. Journeying in these interminable woods, this weapon

is often of use in providing food for myself and others. When I am hungry, I shoot a rabbit, or a squirrel, or a partridge, make me a fire of twigs and sticks which I prepare with my hatchet in some quiet spot, and cook my simple supper."

"I should think you would sometimes find no game, and suffer from starvation," said Rebecca.

"I have been wonderfully provided for," answered Ironthorpe. "The Lord leads me, and gives me what I need. When least expected, shelter and food invite me, — sometimes when I am on the point of perishing, — as if there were angels ever attendant upon my steps, to aid me in doing the will of my Father.

"I remember a time," he continued, "when I thought my God had forsaken me. I reached a hut where I had hoped to procure food, and found it deserted. I was hungry, my wallet was empty, and it was twenty miles to the nearest settlement with which I was acquainted. To increase my difficulties, night was falling, and a storm of wind and snow was setting in.

"So great was my hunger, that I left the *shelter* of the hut, where I had built a good fire,

in hopes that some relief would be sent to meet me. I walked over a little hill, and saw a deer coming directly towards me. We both stopped, and stood face to face. The animal looked at me wonderingly a moment, then started to bound away ; but a charge of buckshot overtook him, and he leaped down into a hollow, dead.

“ Having dragged the carcass to the hut, I said to myself, as I hastened to prepare a portion of the meat for cooking, ‘ Why is so large an animal given me, after all my vain attempts to shoot a squirrel or a quail ? ’ I felt that there was a design in it, for, had I been able to supply my immediate wants in any other way, I should have let a troop of deer go by me unharmed.

“ This was in November ; and I concluded that I was destined to be shut in for some days by the storm. ‘ This meat,’ thought I, ‘ is to feed me.’ But here I was wrong ; for scarcely had the idea entered my mind, when I received company in my hut. A family of emigrants, who had lost their way in the woods and broken their wagon, and who must have perished had not the report of my gun guided them to the spot, came in to share my bounty. They too

were out of provisions, with the exception of a little bread. All that night, and all the next day and night, the storm continued, so that, as it proved, not the smallest eatable portion of the venison was wasted."

Ironthorpe entertained the party with several other anecdotes, of a similar character, illustrating his faith in a Spiritual Power. In this way they reached Solomon Pangborn's house, where a small, ragged troop of children, sallying forth, saluted them with sharp volleys of shouts and laughter.

Here Ironthorpe took leave of the young women, with a parting word of kindly advice for each. Then to Mrs. Pangborn he commended them, expressing an earnest hope that love and harmony would prevail, as long as they remained with her beneath the same roof.

"Well, good by, Becky; good by, 'Tilda," said Reuben, after unloading the sled. "'Guess I must be going back. Take care of yourselves; — and, Becky, be careful and not lose your silver spoons. Ha! ha! ha!"

The spoons had become a standard joke with Reuben, and he annoyed Rebecca a good deal alluding to them on every convenient occa-

sion. But at the present time she was too deeply affected by Ironthorpe's farewell to give much heed to trifles. The very manners of the man, so full of a serene dignity, so expressive of power tempered by love, cheered her eyes; and when he went away, there lingered in her heart a sense of vacancy, as of something lost.

Mr. Oakleaf and the preacher mounted the horses, and rode off, followed far into the woods by those interesting shoots of the Pangborn family tree who had welcomed the party's arrival. The children ran clamoring at the horses' heels, like a pack of good-natured young wolves.

"Hold on, mister!" cried one.

"Le' me ride!" screamed another.

"You 're mean! — Go to grass! — Who cares for you? — Where d'ye steal that sled?" chimed in the chorus.

"No, no, no! — Be careful, boys!" cried Reuben. "Let go the sled-stakes. You 'll get kicked. I can't have this! There, there, there! that 'll do! You 've rode enough."

Very little indeed did the urchins respect Mr. Oakleaf's authority. They piled upon the sled in the most reckless manner, laughing, yelling, and scrambling one upon another.

"By jolly!" cried Reuben, becoming excited, "I'll see about it. Whoa!"

The horse stopped and he dismounted. The boys began to tumble off into the snow, and retreat, laughing saucily.

"Mr. Ironthorpe," said Reuben, "just lend me your gun for a minute. I'll see!"

This menace had the desired effect. A panic seized upon the children, and they ran for their lives; upon which Mr. Oakleaf drove on, walking behind the sled, and keeping a sharp eye on the enemy, until not a straggling marauder was to be seen in the woods.

XV.

THREE FAMILIES IN ONE HOUSE.

Mrs. PANGBORN was an old acquaintance of the Norburns. But Rebecca found her so changed from what she was a few years before, that she would not have known her anywhere else.

The pioneer's wife had formerly been quite a pretty girl ; now she was a worn and faded mother of six children. In her dress and in her housekeeping, she was once a model of neatness ; now she appeared nothing less than the worthy mother of the little bandits who chased Reuben into the woods. With her hair in disorder, her dress in an indescribable state, and her house in a correspondingly bad condition, she welcomed her old friends.

William had warned Rebecca beforehand of what she was to expect, telling her that, since

he had made the best arrangements he could for their temporary accommodation, she must meet the trials that awaited her with a courageous heart. The worst he had said, however, had failed to prepare her mind for the dreadful reality ; and it must be confessed that her spirit shrank with sad misgivings as she entered that, her first home in the backwoods, knowing not when or where she should find another.

But Rebecca had a distinguished talent for finding bright gleams in the darkest pictures, and making the most of them. Instead, therefore, of sitting down to lament and moan, as Mrs. Hancy did, she speedily seized the weapons of music and mirth, and charged upon the troop of forebodings that Disappointment led in grim array against the fortress of her peace, routing them with brilliant success.

"Dear me, Mrs. Pangborn !" she cried, in her most musical voice, "who would have thought of finding you in such a place ? Is this your parlor ? — or your sitting-room ? — or your kitchen ? " laughing, with those misty tears of disappointment still in her eyes. "And which apartment do you intend for my use ? "

"I don't wonder you laugh," replied Mrs.

Pangborn, with a haggard sort of smile. "You 're fresh from the East. You ain't used to new settlements. Wait till you 've been here a little while, — then we 'll see if you laugh."

She hastened to slick up a little, pushing the cradle out of the way, and dusting a dilapidated chair with her ragged apron.

Rebecca was sad again. Perhaps the broken-spirited tone in which Mrs. Pangborn spoke affected her, or it may be that the possibility of herself sinking to such an unhappy domestic condition arose before her mind's eye like a ghost. She hastily dispelled the gathering gloom, however, and scattered gleams of sunshine through the cloud.

In one dim corner of that wretched room Mrs. Pangborn gave her space to bestow her furniture, preparatory to "commencing life." And Rebecca was not long in bringing her energies to the disagreeable task. Whilst Matilda looked on with sighs and complaints, she cleared and swept a spot on the slab-floor, which presently shone bright and beautiful in contrast with the remainder of the room.

Before she had finished, she received unwelcome assistance in the work. The young ban-

ditions, returning from the forest, settled upon her little cargo of goods, which Reuben had left by the door, like a swarm of flies upon a drop of molasses.

"Hillo! I've got a drum!" cried one, pounding the bottom of a new tin pail with a stick of wood.

"Look at my new hat!" screamed another, putting a black kettle on his head, with the bail under his chin, and the legs standing out like horns.

"Out of the way! I'll bite you!" broke out the shrill voice of a smeary-faced girl, snapping at Miles Haney's innocent pug nose with the lid of a teapot, which she opened and shut like a jaw.

The teapot, as well as the youthful proprietor of the pug nose, happened to be a portion of Matilda's goods. She accordingly made a dash at "Hanner," as the girl was called, by way of rescuing Miles, and capturing her weapon.

"Hit me if you dare!" exclaimed the girl, hugging the teapot with all her might.

"Let go!" retorted Matilda, trying to wrench it away. "You've no business with my things."

"I'll bite!" shrieked Hannah.

"Oh-h-h!" articulated her antagonist.

Carrying her threat into execution, the girl had tried the pleasant little experiment of eating Mrs. Haney's thumb.

Thereupon the young hero who wore the helmet of a kettle butted at poor Matilda with the legs. The enterprising drummer abandoned the tin pail for the more expanded surface of her back; and a small boy who had penetrated a sack of flour hit upon the daring exploit of flirting a good handful over her hair, face, and bosom.

In the *mêlée*, down went Hannah, falling upon the teapot; Mrs. Haney fell over Hannah; and the other children manifested a masterful proclivity to pitch into Mrs. Haney. The pile, when complete, looked to the fanciful eye of Rebecca like one huge animal, a heap of monster, with the mangled voices of some family it had devoured shaken up together in its receptacle of digestion.

Miles made no attempt to rescue his mother. He was probably a stanch believer in that sublime system of non-intervention which enables one to regard with philosophic coolness, and at a safe distance, the mortal struggle of the weak

against the strong. Discretion was the only part of valor to which he could lay claim. He had enough of that passive sort; but that he was abundantly lacking in any active heroic qualities one must necessarily have inferred from his wild, prolonged bellow of terror and dismay, which filled the surrounding woods with echoes.

The combined powers of Rebecca and Mrs. Pangborn interposed, however, with an effort to establish peace. They were just in time to prevent a quiet process of strangulation which was going on in the person of little Billy. Matilda, seizing the kettle by one of its legs, had slipped it over the back of his head, until the bail lay like a thin strip of African skin across his throat. The color seemed also to have got into his blood a good deal, for presently, in the midst of his gasps and struggles, he began to grow alarmingly black in the face. Taking him out of the kettle-trap seemed very much like letting a victim down from the gallows, at a moment when the hangman's work is a trifle more than half accomplished. In other words, — to use a little joke Rebecca made on the occasion, — the prisoner was released from *his* oppressive bail-bonds just in the "nick of time,"

When Mrs. Haney, shaking off her assailants, got upon her feet, she presented a rather pleasing figure, with a dash of the tragic in her appearance, by way of contrast. Her hands, dress, and face showed a variety of colors, in streaks and spots, from that of powder of flour to that of sooty kettle, with intermingled shades. Her angry face might have passed for the painted, grimacing visage of a circus clown.

Poor Matilda never forgave the authors of the calamity which befell her on that disastrous day. She maintained a deadly silence on the subject, but Rebecca could see that revengeful feelings rankled in her breast, not only against the real offenders, but against their mother also.

It was in such a family of children, rendered doubly perverse by the presence of Miles and Matilda, that Rebecca was destined to spend her first seven weeks of life in the backwoods. Mrs. Pangborn and Mrs. Haney quarrelled in a morose and taciturn manner almost continually; never coming to high words, but nursing hard and bitter thoughts against each other, and secretly poisoning Rebecca's ear with their jealousies and complaints.

The young wife was incessantly occupied in

devising means to keep peace between her companions. To her husband's tender eyes she appeared, while in the performance of this mission, like an angel of light hovering between two darker and lower beings, to teach them cheerfulness and charity by her sunny example.

The children all this time harassed Rebecca dreadfully. She could not keep a clean spot in her corner of the house free from their depredations. They scattered her little store of goods daily, sometimes carrying her dishes out doors to play with, and leaving them there for her to hunt up at her leisure.

Then Mrs. Pangborn used all her kitchen utensils, because they were so much better than her own. Matilda would not lend ; and during those dreary seven weeks, the brunt of service fell upon the precious articles of Rebecca's little outfit. The result was, that by coarse and careless usage many things she prized almost as much as she did her silver teaspoons were either wholly destroyed, or battered and defaced.

She had many a good crying spell over her troubles, but never once did she abandon herself to ill-temper.

It is too bad," she wrote to her mother, at all my nice things should be treated so!

the ears of my large tin pail have been en off, my spider has lost a leg, and there is d crack in my bake-kettle already. O, I be so glad when William gets his little house, and we are moved into it! I don't enjoy ociety here a bit, except when we go out and together Sundays, or evenings after he is igh with his work. And then, only to think happy we might all be here together, if Ma- and Mrs. Pangborn were a mind to be! I l get along with the dirt, and the noise of children, and all my other troubles, if the en would only be good-natured, and not rel, with me between them to catch the s, all the time.

I try not to feel hard towards either of . Matilda has an unhappy disposition; came honestly by it, as I've heard you say, I presume she can't help it. Ought I not, to feel thankful that mine is not quite so as hers, and do all I can to make her hap-? I really do pity her more than I blame for I tremble to think how much worse I t have been than she is, if I had had such a

mother as hers to bring me up. When I think of this, I forgive Matilda every thing, and love her very much.

“ Then poor Mrs. Pangborn ! how I pity her ! Mr. P. is very cross to her, and the children don’t respect her at all. What would become of me, if William should turn out such a man, and I should have such a family ? It seems as though there was nothing to make her happy, nothing to encourage or cheer her. No wonder she has lost all ambition ! Sometimes I half make up my mind that I won’t lend her any more of my things ; but when I think of her misfortunes, I can’t help feeling kind to her, and I would give her my last saucer, if she asked me for it.

“ O, when I look at such people, and think how good God has been to me, it makes me so humble, — so humble ! and I feel as though I could n’t ever do enough for them that have received fewer blessings than I have. I hope all this experience will make me better. Surely it ought to make me love God more, and be kinder to everybody. But I am very selfish and ungrateful sometimes, and get to feeling proud because I am better off than others. O, I shall

be so glad when Mr. Ironthorpe comes this way again, his talk gives me so much peace, and makes me so strong ! Every day I think over all I can remember of his sayings, and this is one of my greatest comforts, when I am beset by the bitterness and contention of my neighbors."

The original letter from which these extracts are made would not look **very** well, copied literally. Rebecca's grammar was not always good, and in the above quotations I have more than once been obliged to correct her spelling.

I make this statement in order to give the reader a just idea of what was esteemed a fair education for country girls at that day. Rebecca was by no means behind her age. Indeed, she had kept school before marriage with excellent success, teaching those useful branches, reading and writing. This was all she was required to do, excepting to afford the girls instructions in plain sewing, and to give the boys a start in the rudiments of arithmetic.

Such was Rebecca, simple and unlearned. Yet in her domestic education she was not surpassed by any ; and the heart she carried with her into the backwoods was a thing of greater value than all the cold science and all the *glittering wealth* of which the world can boast.

XVI.

REBECCA'S PALACE.

IN the mean time Mr. Norburn had about him, and selected a location for his home.

This was two miles distant from Mr. Norburn's house, in an easterly direction. It was entirely covered with the primeval forest, nor was there sign of either road or path. He cleared a part of his prospective farm, before his

The ground where he designed to build was high and dry, and within half a stone's throw of the spot ran a little brook through the woods, over a shining bed of pebbles. He cut down such trees as were in the way, and others needed in building; and as soon as the snow was gone, he called in his neighbors, and put up a palace for Rebecca.

One week from the day of the raising, the

burns moved. It is impossible to depict Rebecca's joy on the occasion. Turning her back upon the dismal scenes which had so long chafed and darkened her young spirit in Mr. Pangborn's house, she felt as if she had wings. The entire freedom of the blue expanse of sky that smiled above seemed hers. The woods were Elysian fields full of good genii spreading their loving arms of oak and maple to receive her. And the little hut of logs and bark which William had built among the trees was to her a fairy palace.

"O, we will be so happy,—so happy now!" she exclaimed every five minutes, in the midst of snatches of song, as they arranged their little store of goods in the new house. "We shall be all alone here. O how nice!"

Yes, reader, you may laugh. I have laughed many and many a time to hear Rebecca tell about those happy days. She too laughs at the recollection of her dear little palace in the woods,—laughs with tears of tender memories glistening in her eyes.

The dimensions of Rebecca's palace were as follows: it measured some twelve feet square on the ground, with walls seven feet high, and a roof

near three feet higher. This may be considered small; but it must be remembered that it was only a fairy palace, designed for the regal retirement of King William and his spouse. There, living in the midst of one of the largest parks in the world, they could very properly consider themselves monarchs of all they surveyed. Both had frequently constructed castles of much grander proportions; but these were all located in Spain, and not one possessed anything like the marketable value of the one they had chosen for their abode.

One striking feature in this palace deserved especial mention. It had more than a hundred windows. They looked out on every side, affording illumination and ventilation on the most liberal scale. Our royal couple, indeed, though there were too many windows,—not being near so fond of ostentation as kings and queens in general. They accordingly put a stop to the display at as early a day as possible, by simply plastering up those cracks between logs which had been overlooked in the haste of finishing off the walls.

The palace contained two grand openings,—one at which the royal proprietors went in, and

another by which the smoke of the fire went out. The former was cut in the side, and the other in the roof. They were very simple openings, the one boasting of no chimney-top, and the other being equally destitute of that hinged and swinging appendage called a door.

"O, it is such a little bit of a house, ma!"

Rebecca wrote home; "it ain't much bigger than a mouse-trap. But William and I find it large enough to hold more—you don't know how much more—happiness than we thought there was before in the whole world! We call it our palace; for I am sure it is a palace to us. It seems to me now that we shall be quite rich enough when we get a door hung, and a window set in, with a cupboard, and a board floor, and a shelf or two, and a nail to hang the towel on, and an oven like yours at home, and a few more little things which I might mention. But I am quite contented to do without these trifles for the present. I have William all to myself; and he is so good! I can't thank God enough for all he has done for me.

"I am so happy now when I pray! One thing is a little queer. I find myself singing my prayers, before I think of it, while I am

about my work. I am afraid this is wrong. Prayers ought to be more solemn, I think, — at least I always used to think so. But there is something warm and loving and joyful in my heart that will gush out. I hope God will give me, as he does the birds, that sing all their prayers. I am only a silly robin myself.

“By the way, I keep thinking to-day that I’ve got at the secret of the robin language. There’s a dear little pair of these sweet birds fluttering among the branches of a beech-tree before the door, at this minute. I wonder who brought them here? William says they are the only ones he has seen in the woods. Perhaps it’s to keep me company. But about their language: it seems to me they keep singing to each other, — ‘How good God is! He gives us sunshine! Yes, and the beautiful trees. And the sweet spring. And the blue sky. And the soft breezes. And love and happiness and joy.’ They say many more things almost as plain as I can. I hope I ain’t too naughty, but I can’t help feeling that the robins are a great deal better company than Mrs. Pangborn, and Matilda, and the children.

“The little brook is company, too. I c

hear it all day and all night, when William is here and when he is out in the woods chopping; but I hear it most when alone, of course. Sometimes it sounds very sad; and it makes me think of home a good deal; and now and then I catch myself with tears in my eyes, when I sit listening to it. But they are always happy tears. The brook tells me that life is a strange, deep, awful thing; but that it is full of beauty and wonder, and that God watches over every pure and humble heart with eyes of infinite love.

“O ma! if you could only step into our palace once! You would laugh to see the bed taking up almost one side of the room; and the tea things on the chest, which we have made a cupboard of; and the log William stood up by the door this morning for a sink. Last night you should have peeped in at us at supper I made such a nice cup of tea,—at least William thought so,—and I had had good luck with my bread. We had out the silver teaspoons. William laughed at me for setting the table with them, but I guess he was as much pleased to see them as I was; though of course he would *n't* like to own up to being so babyish.

We talked over our prospects, which I enjoyed so much when we are all alone ; and came to the conclusion that, after all, this is the most delightful palace in the world.

" We keep our cow at Mr. Pangborn's. I go over and milk her every morning, and then milk her at night for the keeping. I get about three pints from her, which we find a great luxury. Mr. Pangborn has hired William the oxen to do his spring work with.

" Mr. Oakleaf is going to settle a little son of hers here. I am glad of it, for I don't know of one I should rather have for a neighbor than Fannie. She is certainly a good-hearted creature and she has been very kind to me. She fairly insisted on my taking her wooden bowl, to replace the one that was broke ; but of course I would not agree to it. She declares she will come with me, though, some other way."

Thus wrote Rebecca from her miniature leafy palace in the woods. I have copied so much of her letter for the benefit of young people in general, and of young wives in particular, who are so apt to think that to be happy they must live in a real palace in the midst of all the luxuries wealth can buy.

XVII.

REBECCA AND THE BEAR.

ONE morning Rebecca had been up at Mr. Pangborn's to milk the cow. It was beautiful spring weather; the bright sun shot its arrowy gold in showers aslant the great tree-tops; the winds were soft and warm; and overhead slept a mild blue sky, with scarce a cloud.

Rebecca went singing along the forest path, dancing over the dry brown hills, and tripping through the beds of old leaves that rotted in the hollows. Her heart was running over with happiness, as it was wont to do at such times.

Now she looked up at the sunshine sifting through the branches of the trees. Then her eye followed a sprightly squirrel, that skipped over the ground, stopping every rod to chirp at her, *with his fine bushy tail curved proudly*

over his back. Sometimes she lingered to examine the tender young leaves that fringed with green the underbrush growing among the sturdy trunks. Often, too, she would walk along swinging her little pail of milk, and wondering if there was not enough of it, so that, by being abstemious herself, she could give William a bowlful for dinner.

Suddenly a rabbit ran across her path, and stopped within a few yards of her. It seemed as tame as a kitten. As she approached it, it did not stir, but looked at her pleasantly with its mild eye.

"O poor, dear little thing!" she said, with maternal fondness, putting out her hand as if to stroke its back, "I won't hurt you. Don't be afraid."

When she came too near, however, the animal skipped along a few yards, and stopped again.

"Pussy, pussy! poor pussy!" said Rebecca, instinctively feeling that it ought to understand that term of feline endearment; "come here, you sweet little creature. I won't hurt ——"

Unfortunately, her foot caught a root, and she fell. She put out her hands to catch herself,

and the milk-pail rolled into the hollow, whitening the ground with its contents.

"That is too bad!" she murmured, regaining her feet, and looking with dismay at the traces of her lost treasure. "No milk for William's dinner, — I am so sorry! But there 's no use crying for spilt milk."

She picked up the pail, laughing at herself for her carelessness. At the same time she saw the rabbit making long leaps over the ground towards some thickets on the next hill.

"Ah, you little mischief-maker!" she cried, with playful sadness, "I shall look out for you next time. Make me spill another pail of precious milk if you can! It 's my private opinion you 're a cheat."

Rebecca was soon singing again. She hastened to tell William of the accident, feeling sure that it would be almost as great a treat for him to laugh at her, as to have milk for dinner. But suddenly she stopped; her singing was cut short in the middle of a strain; and all her warm blood seemed to rush upon her heart with violence, leaving her cheeks colorless as marble.

The cause of her terror was certainly rather

formidable. Sitting up almost straight on his rump, right in the path, was a wild animal, black and shaggy, with little round, shining, inquisitive eyes fixed upon his new acquaintance. He was not more than three rods off. Without manifesting the least gallantry, as he might have done, one would think, by stepping aside to let Rebecca pass, there he sat, winking at her with diabolical and malicious gravity.

She had never seen a bear, but the conviction now came upon her with a terrible shock, that a curiosity she had long felt on the subject was at length gratified. She had met Mr. Bruin alone in the woods.

Her first thought was of William. But she could not call him ; she wished to, but had not the power. Besides, he was half a mile off, and could have yielded no assistance. She was paralyzed with fear, — afraid even to move. Gradually, however, better thoughts came to her. Instead of giving herself up as destined and prepared for a hungry bear's choice breakfast, she thought of her God, in whose hands she was, and to whom she looked for help.

A calmness came over her, and she began to *walk backwards* facing the bear. Her heart

now commenced beating with wild, painful throbs, almost suffocating her. She lived an hour of suspense in the next five minutes. Her dear little home in the woods, William's love, his loneliness without her, the past, present, and future, — she thought of every thing.

She had gone backwards but a few paces, when Bruin got up and followed her. Arrived at a respectful distance, where he could regard her conveniently, he sat down again, winking with the same expression of Satanic gravity.

Rebecca quickened her pace ; upon which her queer friend — or enemy, as she esteemed him — got off his rump once more, and trotted along after her. He came up rather nearer than before, and sat down again. This time he opened his jaws, slowly and deliberately, with a wide stretch, then closed them solemnly, as if trying their elasticity, after long fasting. " Rebecca for breakfast " was the genial sentiment his countenance seemed to express.

In this manner the poor girl retreated through the woods, followed by her disagreeable companion. Nearer and nearer he came, and his eyes winked and twinkled with a more deadly humor *at every step*. At length, unable longer

to endure the horrid suspense of her situation, — fearing lest she should fall, but not daring to turn and flee, — she uttered one shrill, prolonged cry for help, which rang through the woods.

This appeared to astonish Bruin. He stopped, and, turning half round, looked at her with his ugly head on one side, as if he would like to know for a certainty whether she really meant it.

“ Now is my time,” thought she ; and, a panic seizing her, she began to run. She flew over the hills like a bird. But presently she heard — or thought she heard — a trotting behind her, and looking over her shoulder, saw Bruin close at her heels.

This was too much. With a shriek she sprang forward, falling upon the ground, and covering her face with her hands. For the next few seconds, she scarcely knew whether the bear was eating her or not, or whether she was alive or dead.

A shout, and rushing footsteps, and a strong arm lifting her up, were the first facts of which she became conscious. She opened her eyes, *and, instead of seeing her dreadful foe, beheld*

the strong, clear features of Ironthorpe bending over her.

It was some time before she was able to utter a word, or even stand upon her feet.

"Where is it?" she at length managed to articulate.

"What? the bear?"

"Yes,"—in a ghastly whisper. "The fright has about killed me."

"He has retired for the moment," said Ironthorpe, smiling. "I do not think the fellow would have hurt you. But his impudence must have been rather alarming, and I am not sorry I hastened over the hill, on hearing your cries. He sat watching you as you lay here, when I came up and frightened him away."

"Why did n't you shoot him?" Rebecca asked, observing Ironthorpe's gun.

"He gave me no chance, except when you were between me and him," he replied. "How white you look!"

"I feel white," said Rebecca, with ever so faint a smile.

"Take my arm, and I will help you home. I was on my way to pay you a visit."

"I am so glad to see you, Mr. Ironthorpe!"

William and I were talking of you this morning. But " — with a bewildered look — " I've got a pail somewhere in the woods."

Rebecca told the story of the rabbit, and the mishap which lost her all the milk she had been so far to obtain.

" This has certainly been a morning of mischances with you," remarked her companion, in a cheering tone. " I hope they are over now. Where did you last see your pail ? "

" I can't tell exactly where ; but I had thrown it down, and that ugly creature was smelling of it. O, there it is ! "

" I should think Bruin had given it a gentle hug, from appearances," laughed Ironthorpe, as he picked it up. " It has got a bruise."

" What bad luck ! " sighed Rebecca. " But I don't care for any thing now you have come," brightening, and regaining her spirits. " You will preach somewhere near here next Sunday, won't you ? We will give you a home in our palace as long as you will stay. O, we've such a funny little palace ! It will make you laugh to see it. It's about the size of a hen-coop ; but we can make up an extra bed for you, and do you off a bed-room by hanging up a blanket in one corner."

They walked on. Rebecca was fast recovering from the agitation attendant upon her adventures.

“ There ! do you hear ? ” she cried at last, with sparkling eyes. “ That ’s William’s axe. O, I have so much to tell him ! I could fly ! ”

XVIII.

SUSPENSE AND ALARM.

THE young wife contented herself with waiting, however, and in due time she arrived with her companion at the spot where Mr. Norbur was chopping.

He was on the outskirts of a wild maze of tangled trunks and tops of trees, which he had cut down one after another, letting them lie as they fell. The comers arrived in time to see the majestic arms of a fine maple—at the roots of which he stood, axe in hand, watching its motion—stir among the surrounding tree-tops, then, swinging over slowly at first, sweep through the air with accelerated rushing, and fall with one loud crash, as of thunder, adding another trophy to the heap of slaughtered forest-kings whose branching honors strewed the ground.

William was delighted to see the preacher. His joyous expression of face changed to helpfulness when he heard the story of the and he looked earnestly at Rebecca, as if he were sure that she had not been eaten up, all.

"I don't like the idea of bears prowling round our palace," he said, striking his axe into the trunk of the maple he had felled, then wiping the sweat from his brow with his hand. "I shall lose something of more consequence than my dinner of milk, some pleasant morning I am afraid."

"I should n't be much frightened another time," said Rebecca, growing courageous. "Ironthorpe says he don't think the bear hurt me."

"I would n't like to risk him," replied Mr. Iron, thoughtfully, through his teeth.

Meanwhile Ironthorpe stood gazing in silence on the ground, his right arm resting on the barrel of his gun.

"I ought to have followed him," he said, at last.

"But I am so accustomed to seeing bears cast and letting them pass by me undisturbed, that I did not think of the mischief he

might do at some future time. I will go after him now, and have at least one encounter with him before I give up the chase."

"I 'll go with you," cried William, with enthusiasm.

"Won't there be danger?" asked Rebecca, anxiously.

Ironthorpe smiled significantly.

"Not if I go alone. Stay with your wife, William Norburn. She would tremble for you every moment of your absence, if you should go. I will take care of Bruin."

William would not agree to this. He was determined to accompany Ironthorpe; nor did Rebecca oppose him.

"Do put on your coat," said she, rolling down his shirt-sleeves to cover his brown arms.

"You will take cold, you are so sweaty. And if you go, you will be careful, won't you?"

"The musket will come in play," remarked William, excited. "Have you got plenty of bullets, Mr. Ironthorpe? Hadn't we better get Mr. Pungborn to join us with his dog?"

"The dog would only be in the way."

"But can we track the bear?"

"Better than we could with a yelping cur. I

understand Bruin's habits, and am pretty sure of finding him. If you will come, get your gun. We must be off."

It was not without misgivings that Rebecca saw her husband depart with Ironthorpe on so novel and exciting an expedition. All that forenoon she sang less, but listened more to the birds, and sympathized more with the brooklet's unceasing complaint, than she had ever done before.

The sun went up into the cloudless sky, and poured its full-flooded radiance through the forest opening William had made upon the lowly abin of logs and bark. It was high noon ; and the hunters were still absent.

Rebecca had set her little table with three plates ; but no dinner was eaten in her house that day. She watched the shadows of the great trees creeping towards her out of the solemn gloom of the woods, as the sun went down behind them ; and still she was alone.

She had busied herself during the greater part of the day in her little garden, before the house. This was a rough spot of ground, choked up with stumps and roots, in the midst of which she had managed to plant some pota-

toes and corn, and a few garden seeds ; and here, that long, lonesome day, for the first time she worked when her husband was not in sight, and his axe was not heard in the clearing, and no cheering shout was flung to her from his manly chest. She left her toil at an earlier hour than usual that evening, in order to get a bountiful supper for the hunters, who must soon return, she thought, weary and hungry, from their jaunt.

She let the table stand as she had arranged it for dinner, and prepared some bacon for frying. Then, raking open the hot embers of the fire, she placed in the warm bed thus made a heap of the nicest potatoes she could find in the bag, and left them there to bake. This done, she filled the teakettle from the brook, and set it upon the fire.

Rebecca had made calculations to have a pie for supper. She meant that it should be one of her best pies, and that William and their guest should eat it hot. Would the reader like to hear how she baked it ? Her pie-oven, I should first state, was as primitive as that in which she baked her potatoes. Having made a *clean place* between the stones which served as fire-

dogs, she put down the pie and placed her grid-iron over it ; covering this with an old sheet of tin, then heaping live coals and hot embers upon the whole. In this manner she baked such dried-apple pies as William enthusiastically pronounced the best in the world, he did not care where the others were found.

When Rebecca had got every thing in readiness, she grew more and more anxious about the hunters, for night was fast approaching, and she was still alone. Many and many a time she had left her work and looked out into the darkening woods from the low doorway, to see if they were coming ; but only the undisturbed expanse of gloom met her eye. The owl shouted in the ghostly solitudes when she listened for their voices, and the dusky bat flitted athwart the twilight sky when, with a swelling heart, she glanced through the tree-tops at the latest and faintest flush of sunset in the west.

Suddenly she heard two reports of fire-arms, one immediately succeeding the other. Her pulse leaped with joy at the supposed signal of her friends. She would have run out to meet them, but the tea was to be " put to drawing."

and a dish of gravy was to be made. Her heart fluttered with happiness as she set about these final preparations for supper ; but before they were completed, she had to look out more than once to see if William and his companions were yet in sight.

They were a long time coming, and she began to grow anxious again, but consoled herself with the reflection that the bear was heavy and that they would have to stop often to put down.

Running out at last to meet them, she saw two figures moving among the trees in a mysterious manner. Her heart sunk. They were evidently strangers, and their actions inspired her with suspicion. She retreated towards the house upon which they came out of the gloom, and followed her with stately steps, one walking directly in front of the other.

Rebecca watched them anxiously from the door-way, and presently made a discovery that filled her with alarm. Flying rumors, which had reached the settlements, of war declared and dangers threatening the frontier, recurred to her mind, with a shock which chilled her blood. Then, remembering the two shots si

had taken to be signals fired by Ironthorpe and her husband, she sent up a silent prayer of agony for their safety.

The poor child stood quaking with fear, scarcely conscious of what she did or said, when the tall forms of the two Indians entered the door-way, and saluted her with a comprehensive "Ugh!"

XIX.

REBECCA AND THE INDIANS.

THE extremity to which Rebecca was driven gave birth to a sort of courage. With a deep inward prayer and a sense of reliance on Providence calming and strengthening her cowardly little heart, she resolved to meet with cheerful submission whatever fate awaited her. With a face pale as ashes, but no longer shrinking or flinching, she hastened to place chairs for her unbidden guests.

“ Good ! ” said the foremost of the two, with evident satisfaction. “ White squaw no ’fraid ? ”

Rebecca’s heart was in her throat, and she could reply only by pointing at the chairs.

“ White squaw no talk ? ” said the visitor, without moving a muscle of his dark face, which looked so frightful in its paint as the fire light shone upon it. “ Good ! Indian squaw talk too much.”

The speaker, without turning his head, exchanged a low guttural word with his companion, who stood respectfully behind him, then glanced his keen eye around the little room.

"Me good Indian," he said, with the same immovable expression; "me white man's friend. Me come see white man. White man no here?"

"Have n't you seen him?" burst from Rebecca's lips, in her anxiety for William's safety.

"White squaw talk, she mind to," replied the savage, with grave humor. "White squaw lost her man?"

"He went out to shoot a bear," answered Rebecca, confusedly. "I thought—I heard his gun—two guns in the woods—"

The tall savage pointed first at the barrel of the gun he carried, then at that of his companion.

"Hunt all day—find no game—shoot out old load—put in new load," he said, with pointed brevity. "Night come—wigwam long way off—Indian hungry—ugh!" giving an eager glance at the fried ham on the table.

"I will give you something to eat, if you are hungry," answered Rebecca, recovering hope and self-possession. "Won't you sit down?"

"Ugh!" grunted the savage, with a disdainful look at the chairs.

Rebecca thought he might feel a contempt for such humble splint-bottoms and rude frames. But his conduct undeceived her. Pushing them aside, he squatted deliberately upon the ground before the fire. His companion silently followed so brave an example; and there the two sat, picturesque in their paint and feathers, and their moccasins embroidered with quills of the "fretful porcupine," ostentatiously displayed under their bare legs.

How anxiously, as they sat there, did poor Rebecca listen for the footsteps of Ironthorpe and William! But the shadows of the awful woods gathered with deeper gloom over that lonely hut, and she was still alone with her Indian guests.

She nervously prepared a hospitable supper, resolved to treat them kindly, whether their intentions were hostile or friendly. Her reason told her that she had no cause to fear; but rea-

son was less powerful than the instinctive dread her savage friends inspired.

So great was her fear of approaching them, that for a long time she hovered around the big chief who had done the talking, before she ventured to step over his gun in order to reach the heap of potatoes roasting in the ashes. At length, however, she went through with the daring feat, and opened the glowing bed with the shovel.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the chief, a gleam of satisfaction flashing across his stoical features.

made a quick motion, at which Rebecca started back in alarm. But he only seized a potato all hot and smoking from the embers, and, having tossed it from hand to hand, gave it to his companion. Then taking another, he broke it open, and, laying one half upon the ground, stuck a splinter of wood in the other piece, by which he could hold it while it cooled.

"Um good!" he said, with a grave nod of satisfaction, having picked off a bit of the vegetable with his fingers, and eaten it, after blowing upon it in *his palm* to reduce its tempera-

ture. "White squaw good roast. Meat! pointing at the dish of ham on the table.

Rebecca placed some slices on a pewter plate, which she handed her visitors with fork. The last-named articles they disdainfully declined, using their fingers, according to established rules of Indian etiquette.

Having eaten plentifully, the big chief grunted complacently, sucked his fingers, and jumped upon his feet. Rebecca, who had stood by during the ceremony of supper, looking on with an anxiously beating heart, shrank from him timidly, and watched his movements, hoping that her guests were about to depart. Appearances did not encourage her. The Indian began to examine the interior of her household in a manner which was probably in strict accordance with the rules of good breeding regarded by his tribe, but which in a white man would have savored rather strongly of impudence. He looked behind the bed, inspected the bag of potatoes, smelt of the smoked ham, and put his nose into every dish he could find. His wonder and curiosity seemed to be in a lively state of excitement. At length he discovered Rebecca's cullender, the fashion of which delighted

him hugely. He showed it to his companion, looked through it at the fire, and finally, sticking a couple of feathers in the holes, and putting it on his head, strutted proudly round the room, in the flashing fire-light.

Rebecca laughed in spite of herself at the ludicrous figure he made. She supposed he would be offended, but, on the contrary, he seemed quite pleased at the attention, and strutted more proudly than ever.

"Certainly," thought Rebecca, "these are friendly Indians. It was foolish to be afraid of them. But William,—what has become of him?"

She suffered intensely as the evening dragged heavily away. Soon, all the ludicrous actions of her savage companions had ceased to interest her. At one time she had contemplated making her escape by the door, when unobserved; but now the dark, uninhabited forest seemed far more to be dreaded than the company of her guests. She sat down upon the bed, and listened, listened with painfully strained senses, to hear the step of her husband. Only the hoot of the owl, and the sighing of the wind through the woods, and the ceaseless murmur

of the brook, met her ear. "How could I leave her so long alone?" was the troubling thought of her soul.

She was aroused by a startling incident. The curious Indian, having found the whiskey jug, was holding it at right angles to his mouth while a gurgling sound indicated the fact that a portion of its contents was running down his throat. Having drank freely, and smacked his lips, he held out the jug with a grunt of approval to his companion.

The scene which followed was almost too much for Rebecca's sensitive nerves. The savages drank, and danced, and yelled. Their dignity and reserve melted under the demoralizing influence of the jug, and they chattered together in the silliest manner imaginable. Their tipsy laughter, which their pride had long kept bottled up, gurgled like water from uncorked hearts. Some of the antics they performed were extremely ludicrous, while others were decidedly thrilling. The manner in which one of them took the imaginary scalp of the cullender, made poor Rebecca smile; but when he danced round her, and kicked up his heels, flourishing his knife, as if about to demon-

his skill and prowess on her own head, she almost fainted with terror.

Suddenly she uttered a cry of joy, and, springing forward, fell powerless at the feet of Ironthorpe, whose eagle face and athletic form appeared in the door-way of the hut.

XX.


ADVENTURES IN THE BACKWOODS.

WHEN Rebecca fully recovered her consciousness, she found herself lying on the bed. Before her stood Ironthorpe, holding up the jug in his left hand, and menacing the savages with his right, while he addressed them in a stern, authoritative manner in their own language. Their chattering and laughter had ceased ; they were cowering sheepishly under his rebuke, and presently they lay down obediently upon the ground by the door, assuming a position from which they scarcely stirred during the remainder of the night.

Meanwhile Rebecca had looked in vain for William in the hut.

“ Where is he ? ” she eagerly asked of Ironthorpe.

“ I do not know,” replied the preacher. “ He set out to return before me.”



"But if he has got lost?"

"The morning light will find him. At all events, he is in the hands of his God."

Ironthorpe spoke cheerfully. But Rebecca could not help thinking that his manner indicated some anxiety for her husband. When he told his story, it only added to her distress.

Having succeeded in finding the bear, and marked him with a couple of gun-shot wounds, they followed him all day from swamp to swamp, until, at the approach of nightfall, Mr. Norburn set out to return home. Ironthorpe kept on, resolved to despatch the enemy, before he gave up the hunt. Fortunately he came unexpectedly upon him in a hollow, and shot him down.

"Returning," said Ironthorpe, in conclusion, "I blazed the trees with my hatchet; and in the morning we will go for the game. You will find the bear good eating, — much better than pork."

"I am glad he did not eat me first, — I should have been prejudiced against the meat afterwards," replied Rebecca, with quiet humor. "As it is, I don't think I shall much like the taste of *my chance acquaintance*."

Again anxious thoughts of William filled her mind, her smiles vanished, and she repined at his absence.


"The good God will take care of him," said Ironthorpe, as he sat down to the supper she had prepared. "I confess to you, I think he has lost his way, for he is not accustomed to the woods. But you will see him in the morning."

"In the morning!" echoed Rebecca, with a shuddering glance at the Indians. "And there are wolves in the woods!"

"And angels in heaven, and the hand of Providence everywhere. Let us be thankful for present benefits, and not torture our minds with distrust. Supposing I had not come to-night, and you had been left alone with these good-natured savages?"

Rebecca shuddered again, looking up from the fire before which she had knelt to take the pie out of the ashes.

"Why was it," continued Ironthorpe, "that I felt a presentiment of all that has occurred? I came by the door of Mr. Pangborn's house, — the forest was dark before me, — but still I kept on. I knew that I was needed here, and so I came, never doubting."



"I wish I had a faith like yours!" exclaimed Rebecca, smiling sadly. "Sometimes I think I have no settled belief in God at all."

Ironthorpe answered encouragingly. Meanwhile she exhumed the gridiron, and taking up the pie with a cloth, placed it on the table.

"I was very fortunate to keep this away from the Indians," she said in a whisper, thinking they might not be asleep. "Now if William was here! He is so fond of my pies!"

Ironthorpe smiled, and told her not to cut the pie until William came for his share.

"No, no," insisted Rebecca. "You must have a piece now."

"It will not be kind in you to make me eat it steaming from the fire," said Ironthorpe. "My tastes are simple; I relish my food best cold, or moderately warm; and I do not desire to fall again into the depraved habits of eating which I ignorantly formed in my childhood. I know by experience how much better, how much more agreeable to the palate too, is plain, homely fare, than richly prepared dishes, when we have once brought our appetites to a natural condition. Hot pies, hot drinks, fat gravies,—all such things are fatal to that fine relish with

which we should enjoy our food. More they are almost as bad as tobacco and al to destroy the freshness of life and nature deaden our susceptibilities. If you would your spiritual powers quickened, — if you v enjoy sweet thoughts of heaven, — if you v see God in earth and sky and feel him in soul; — eat no more gross food than your b strength absolutely requires, and avoid all dietetic evils."

Rebecca was interested. She desired thorpe to tell her more, but he smilingly that she had heard enough for one lesson. he would wait to see how she profited by suggestions he had given her.

"Then I suppose I must not eat any ho to-night," said she, laughing. "It will c hard to give up such things."

"So much the better," exclaimed her c panion. "If our self-denial cost us nothir would teach us little."

The two sat up a long time waiting for liam. Ironthorpe had said from the first, th should not expect him until morning; but becca could not bear the thought of goin bed until he came.

Anxious as she was, however, she deeply enjoyed her conversation with the preacher. His grand philosophy, his Christian goodness, his overflowing spirit of love, filled her with calm, strengthening, elevating thoughts. What a pure and holy joy expanded her soul when he told her his noble conceptions of those teachings of Jesus which the enlightened world, even at this day, understands only in a material and superficial sense ! He regarded every sentence uttered by that Divine Man as a fountain of wisdom, whose waters the burning thirst of ages can never exhaust.

At length he told Rebecca that she must try to get some sleep. He helped her put up a blanket before her bed, then bidding her good night, resumed his seat by the fire. For an hour, he sat there plunged in reverie, — motionless, except that now and then he drew in a long breath, which sounded somewhat like a sigh. Finally, with clasped hands and closed eyes, a heavenly light irradiating his severe features, he murmured a low prayer, which seemed to gush softly from his heart to his lips, then laid himself down by the fire and fell asleep.

All this time, poor Rebecca was kept awake with anxious thoughts. After Ironthorpe had lain down, she felt herself once more alone. Often she closed her eyes, with a desperate determination to sleep, but after enduring the punishment of lying still for a few minutes, she would look out from her retirement to see if daylight had yet appeared.

The quilt which answered the purpose of a door hung silently in its place, waving slowly as the chill night-air, seeking entrance to the hut, swayed it to and fro. But there was no glimmer of dawn about its edges, at any time when Rebecca looked out. By the dim light of the smouldering fire only could she perceive the sleeping forms of the Indians, and assure herself that Ironthorpe was still between her and them.

But long as was the night, day dawned at last. At the first glimmer of gray light, Rebecca heard a sudden and alarming sound. The Indians sprang up, barking like frightened swine, and a terrible commotion of some seconds followed.

But Rebecca recognized the voice of William, and her fear was changed to joy. On

entering the obscurity of the hut, he had stumbled over the Indians. He afterwards confessed that the greatest fright he ever received in his life occurred when they jumped up with their unearthly "Ugh-ughs," throwing him headlong to the ground.

In a few words Ironthorpe, who was already upon his feet, pacified the savages, and reassured William.

"Well, hold on!" cried the latter, in an excited manner. "Wait a minute Becky. Here, you Red-skins,—stand by the door and don't let any thing out."

"Why, what is the matter?" asked the distressed wife. "What do you mean, William?"

"Catch it,—there!" exclaimed Mr. Norburn, scarcely heeding her. "Don't you see, Mr. Ironthorpe?"

The preacher stirred up the slumbering coals, and put on some strips of birch-bark, which, flaming up in a moment, threw a bright glow on the scene. William sprang forward just in time to prevent the apparition of an animal from leaping into the fire.

"Oh! what is it?" cried Rebecca.

"Stop it, Mr. Ironthorpe! I would n't have

it get away now for five dollars. I've carted it pretty near fifty miles in my arms. I thought I never should find the way home. There you are, young gentleman! I've got you!"

William had caught the little creature, and folded it in his arms.

"Is it a lamb?"

"A lamb? No, indeed, Becky. It is something prettier than that. It's a young fawn and I've brought it to you for a present. I've been all night getting it home; but I know you'd be pleased with it."

"It is very nice! But I should have been quite as well pleased,"—Rebecca could not help saying,—“if you had not left me alone, to be frightened to death.”

"I thought of that—after I had caught this fine fellow here," replied William. "But I was in hopes Mr. Ironthorpe would conclude to turn back. Then I found my way through the woods as fast as I could; for I was tired and had to sit down and rest every little while with my prize."

Meanwhile the Indians had glided sheepishly out of the hut, followed by Ironthorpe, who endeavored in a friendly way to detain the

Then Rebecca told her husband all about the frightful night she had passed, and wept away her grief upon his bosom. He tried to cheer her, reproaching himself bitterly, and promising never to be so thoughtless again, if she would forgive him.

“O, you know I do!” murmured Rebecca, smiling through her tears, — “and thank you too for my present. I can imagine you chasing this dear little creature through the woods, and carrying it so many miles in your arms, because you thought it would please me! Besides, you did n’t know the Indians would come and frighten me, — how could you?”

William did not like to confess, that, in the excitement of the chase, Rebecca had not been thought of until the game was caught.

He told the story of his adventures, during the relation of which she prepared breakfast. With the exception of a light luncheon he carried with him to the bear-hunt, William had eaten nothing since the morning before, and he declared himself on the point of starvation.

X X I.

PEACEFUL DAYS.

IRONTHORPE passed several weeks with the Norburns, preaching the Gospel in neighboring settlements. His very presence was fragrant with peace ; and ever after Rebecca looked back to the days he spent beneath their lowly roof as among the holiest and happiest of her life.

Ironthorpe was a practical man. His good works did not consist in fine words alone. While he fed the spirit with heavenly bread, he delighted to help all who needed such assistance with the labor of his hands.

Rebecca wrote to her mother, that she did not know how she could have got along without him, "any way in the world." He made a chamber-floor of the sleigh-box, which he took to pieces for the purpose. He hewed out

pegs with his hatchet, and drove them up around the room, in places where she wished to hang such articles as the dish-cloth, towel, gridiron, and William's coat and hat. How much better were the pegs than sticks stuck in cracks between the logs! and how rich Rebecca felt when thus provided for!

One day Ironthorpe split a clear-grained maple log, and took out a slab which he hewed down flat and smooth. Rebecca could not guess what he was going to do, until, returning the next morning from Mr. Pangborn's with her pail of milk, she found a fine shelf established over the chest which had so long served as cupboard and pantry.

The preacher's next work was greater than any thing he had yet done. Returning from one of his excursions in the vicinity, he brought a load of old clapboards upon his shoulder, which he had procured of some magnanimous backwoodsman. For a long time it was a mystery to Rebecca what he was going to do with them. He did not choose to tell her, and William, who had probably guessed the secret, laughingly requested her to "wait and see."

In default of nails, Ironthorpe pegged the boards together on a frame he had constructed, by cutting one of them to pieces. When all was completed, he manufactured hinges out of one of William's old boots ; then all of a sudden Rebecca was indescribably delighted to see the "queer platform," as she called it, arise to the respectable character of a door.

"I never was so glad of any thing !" she exclaimed, with shining moisture in her eyes.

"Yes, you were just as glad when I drove up the pegs," said Ironthorpe, his countenance beaming with the light of his great, good soul.

"I am sure I was,—and when you made the shelf,—and when you put up the chamber floor ; but now it seems as though I had n't any thing to desire. I 'm perfectly happy. We are rich enough. I sha'n't be troubled any more with this old quilt, which keeps falling down. And I can sleep now without dreaming every night that bears are creeping in, bent on being revenged for their companion we are eating."

"O blessed child !" exclaimed Ironthorpe, as he fitted the wooden latch, "you are indeed rich who have all you want. Yet is there *nothing* you desire ? "

"Nothing in the world!" replied Rebecca, in her enthusiasm about the door.

"But you know this is going to make your room quite dark."

"O, we can have it open these warm, bright days!"

"Except when it storms," suggested the preacher.

"Then I shall have to do the best I can. It won't let in the wind and the rain, as the quilt used to, — that 's one good thing."

"But would n't a window be a very convenient addition?"

"O yes!" cried Rebecca, impulsively. "But I 'm not going to ask for so much all at once. I shall be contented to do without a window for a year, — or two years, if need be."

"That is well," answered Ironthorpe, smiling. "Do you know how strong it makes me to hear you talk so?"

"I make you strong!"

"You need not be surprised. I feel that there is a sort of affinity between your soul and mine. You give me strength by drawing out that which is deep within me, — by stirring up

feelings which few, very few," — with a sad smile, — "have the power to awaken. The spirit your words and looks express makes me overflow with love to God and all his creatures."

Rebecca wept with exalted pleasure.

"Do you tell me true?" she asked, with gushing emotion. "Am I a help to you in any way?"

"You are the best of helps, for you help me to know myself, — you draw out my own strength. The man who gives me dollars and bread bestows mean trifles, but he who enriches me with the gold of truth, and feeds my soul with heavenly food, fulfils the mission of angels."

"But I tell you nothing great and good; I am as simple and ignorant as a child."

"Understand me," said Ironthorpe. "You might pour out before me all the stores of learning, and interpret Plato's thoughts, yet fail to benefit me. But when something in you, which I see in your face, and hear in the tone of your voice, and feel in your presence, fills my soul, I am greater, and better, and stronger. You feed me unconsciously by the spirit of goodness which abides in you."

"You make me very happy," replied Rebecca.
"Yet I am unhappy,—for I know I am not near—not near so good as you think me."

"You are not so good as you might be, or should be, or will be,—I know that. Yet you can very well aid one so poor in heavenly treasures as myself."

After providing the little log tenement with a door, Ironthorpe resolved that it should have a window. Accordingly, on one of his journeys, he procured a small sash, containing four narrow panes of glass. He carried it I know not how many miles through the woods, and, on his arrival, placed it in the chamber out of sight.

Rebecca was absent at the time, engaged in the delightful occupation of swinging on the limb of a fallen tree, down where William was chopping. But she heard the sound of an axe on the hill, and, looking up, saw Ironthorpe cutting a hole in the side of the house. By his side stood the young fawn,—a pretty creature, already growing quite tame,—eating the tender blades of a bundle of grass he had brought from farther up the brook.

"I am so glad to see you!" cried Rebecca,

running up to him. "But what are you chopping down our palace for?"

"Don't you want some nice chips for your fire?" asked Ironthorpe, smiling, as he took her hand.

"Dear me! William makes cords of chips, and I have just been for a basket full."

"But his chips are green. Now these will be nice to burn, the logs are so well seasoned. You 'll see."

And Ironthorpe hacked away on the house.

"O, I know!" cried Rebecca. "You mean to make a place for the window-sash we are going to get in the course of next year."

"You 've guessed pretty well this time."

"But — you are very kind — I 'd rather not have a hole cut there, though, until we get a sash, — if you please."

"Why not?" asked Ironthorpe, feigning surprise.

"It will let in the storms, and — how can I stop it up?"

"I 'll arrange it for you, if that 's your only trouble."


Rebecca was a little disturbed in her mind. But she placed unlimited confidence in her

friend, and left him chopping, while she busied herself getting dinner. He worked with his accustomed energy, and before William came up, he had cut a hole large enough to talk through, face to face, with Rebecca.

After dinner he afforded his friends a pleasant surprise, by reaching up to the chamber floor and taking down the sash. Rebecca was quite beside herself with joy during the rest of the day; yet her happiness seemed not to have reached its height until, on the following morning, she saw the sash firmly fixed in its place, and her palace boasted of a window.

Ironthorpe's next undertaking was one equally acceptable to Rebecca. He brought together a heap of stones, and built her a fire-place and oven out doors. How often did she have cause to thank him for that favor, during the hot summer weather that succeeded! She did not know what she should have done, "any way in the world," she wrote her mother, if her kind friend had not relieved her from heat and smoke in the house, by enabling her to do all her cooking in the open air.

Ironthorpe's heart seemed continually to overflow with love. With the Norburns he was



generally cheerful, and sometimes playful. But there were hours when his strong, bright spirit was softened and bedimmed with the deepest melancholy. Then he would wander through the woods, conversing with the beautiful forms of Nature, or more sublimely communing with Nature's God. On his return from such excursions, Rebecca always remarked that an immortal joy, ineffably deep and tender, shone in his face and lived in the tones of his voice.

Yet Ironthorpe's sadness was never a dark cloud. It was more like the morning mist which veils the mountain's brow, as it floats up from the valley in the golden light of heaven.

"You must have seen a great deal of trouble in your day, Mr. Ironthorpe," Rebecca once ventured to remark. "You have carried a heavy cross."

"Thank God, I have!" answered Ironthorpe. "Affliction has torn up my heart,—I suffer still. But it is only the passing of the plough. The deeper the furrow, the more bountiful the harvest. Ah, Rebecca, you are happy to-day; you love the all-loving God; but when some great sorrow shall have crushed your heart like a flower beneath its tread, it will give out odors you little dream of now,"

"You have told me that I shall suffer something like that," said Rebecca, in a subdued tone.

"You will, — I hope so, for your own sake," replied her friend, with a radiant smile. "But, O my sister, when the dark hour comes, let patience have her perfect work. Lay your head upon the loving bosom of the Father, praying, 'THY WILL BE DONE.' All will then be well."

Thus the peaceful days of spring flowed by. The golden gates of summer opened. But now the time had arrived for Ironthorpe to journey to some distant place. Rebecca thought he might have become weary of the woods, and that he was returning to the world from which he was self-exiled.

"Not yet, not yet," he said to her, with a sad smile. "I shall drink no more of the salt waves of a hypocritical society. My mission is to preach the Gospel in the wilderness; and I have much to do before I die. You may, therefore, hope to see me again before the summer is over."

So Ironthorpe departed, leaving a shadow on Rebecca's heart.

XXII.

THE LOGGING-BEE.

DURING the spring and early summer months, William had accomplished a great deal of work. Day by day Rebecca had seen the little opening in the forest, which let down a bright spot of sunshine upon her palace roof, grow larger and larger, as one by one the trees fell before the young farmer's axe.

In the mean time her garden flourished wonderfully. She had a few cucumbers, and some nice heads of lettuce, which the young couple found a great luxury; and notwithstanding the stumps and roots, the melon-vines she had planted were doing well. The soil was very rich, there were no weeds to trouble her, and she had only to dig a little place for whatever she wished to produce. In this way she was raising a few hills of potatoes and corn, of

which she was exceedingly proud. No geese or hogs, or wild animals, disturbed her horticultural operations ; but when the fawn had become tame enough to run out of its pen, it used to do some trifling damage now and then in capering over the ground.

Rebecca had already planted some apple-seeds and peach-pits, for a future orchard, and set out a hop-vine, which she meant to make run all over the side of her little palace, shading the door and climbing upon the roof. Such, then, were the first simple improvements effected in a spot where at this day stands one of the finest farm-houses in the State, in the midst of thrifty orchard-trees and beautiful garden-walks, with broad, rich fields and meadows outspread all around.

One day, when the wind was in the right direction to blow the smoke from the house, William set fire to the fallow in several places. At first the dry boughs of the fallen trees crackled, and blazed up fitfully ; then the wind drove the flames into the heaped-up tree-tops, hissing and roaring ; and soon there was a magnificent conflagration. Mr. Oakleaf and Mr. Pangborn were present to assist in check-

ing the fire, in case it should get into the woods and become unmanageable. But the undertaking was prospered; the fallow burned beautifully; and the following morning presented a scene which filled Rebecca with amazement. Where the tangled labyrinth of fallen trees had been before, she saw only a smoking waste of charred timber and blackened soil, with many a heap of rubbish still ablaze.

Then came the logging-bee. It was a memorable time. Salome came over to help Rebecca, bringing her baby, then only a little more than a week old. I should have before stated that the Oakleafs had settled within about half a mile of the Norburns.

Rebecca, who was passionately fond of babies, was delighted to see her friend, but she "scolded her dreadfully" — she wrote her mother — "for her imprudence."

"Bless you!" cried Salome, "I am as strong as I ever was in my life. Matilda came down to help me a few days, you know; but I got tired of seeing her mopish face round the house, and sent her away. Day before yesterday I did as large a washing as I've done in a year. What do ye think of that?"

Rebecca only wondered.

Salome left her baby in Timmy's charge, and assisted her in getting dinner for the men. Meanwhile the woods resounded with shouts and yells most hideous to hear, and the fallow presented a busy scene.

At about ten o'clock William came to the house, and, with a dissatisfied look, asked Rebecca for the jug of whiskey.

"O William! I thought you were not going to drink any more," said she. "You told Mr. Ironthorpe you had concluded not to."

"And I don't mean to now. I am convinced liquor is bad for anybody. Ever since them Red-skins got drunk here, and frightened you to death, I've been disgusted with the very thought of it."

"Then what do you want of the jug?"

"The truth is," replied William, "there are some who think me mean because I have not provided whiskey for the bee. It's the custom to furnish it on such occasions."

"But if you know it is bad?"

"How can I help myself?"

"Oh! here is Mr. Ironthorpe!" cried Rebecca, in joyful surprise. "He will tell you what to do."

In fact, the preacher entered the hut.

"I am here sooner than you expected," he said, greeting his old friends. "But I could not pass within a few miles of you, and not see you. I suppose you have heard that war has been declared."

"No!" cried Mr. Oakleaf, who had followed him into the hut.

"La, Reuben! how pale you look!" observed Salome, facetiously.

Her husband's face was so black with soot that her remark created quite a laugh. More than one heart, however, felt anxious about the gloomy intelligence.

"We shall have the Indians on the frontier," said William, thoughtfully. "Have you heard of any hostile appearances in this quarter?"

"Not as yet. I am on my way to ascertain, if possible, what we are to expect. To-day is your logging-bee, I perceive."

"Yes, sir; I have had good luck with my fallow so far, and if the British will be so good as not to set the savages on us, I think we shall do pretty well."

"One thing troubles William to-day, though," added Rebecca, smiling. "You must tell him what to do."

"I tell nobody what to do. I only give advice," replied Ironthorpe. "Every man must learn to use his own reason and free will."

"That is true," said William, "but in this case I am obliged to act contrary to my reason; I cannot use my free will. My good friends who have come to help me expect that I shall furnish whiskey, and it goes against my conscience to do it. But I suppose I shall have to."

"Are you firmly convinced that whiskey will be a bad thing to give your neighbors?" asked the preacher, thoughtfully.

"I am," replied William.

"Then beware!"

"But my work must be done. The fallow must be cleared."

"At the sacrifice of your own manhood?"

"Why — no — not exactly —"

"Listen," said Ironthorpe. "Whenever a man abandons principle for expediency, — whenever he acts contrary to the dictates of conscience and reason to procure an immediate good, — he sacrifices a portion of his manhood."

"But what can I do?"

"Do right, be the consequences what they

will. Do right, and you will make an everlasting gain, whatever may be your present loss. Do right, and although your neighbors may scorn and avoid you to-day, in the end you will find the whole world, nature and God, on your side. Truth is the central sun of the universe : be Truth yourself, and you shall see all things revolve harmoniously around you, according to immutable laws."

William hesitated, looking down with his hand upon the jug.

"What shall I say to the men?" he murmured.

"Truth is never at a loss what to say," replied Ironthorpe, somewhat sternly. "It has no smooth stories to invent. Its way is plain."

The struggle was a severe one. William loved justice ; he always strove with an earnest soul to do right ; but he lacked the courage required to come out boldly, and declare his principles and his resolutions, at the risk of losing the respect and assistance of his friends. But a look, a whisper, and a pressure of the hand from Rebecca decided him.

"I'll do my best," he said, putting away the jug. "But it's a hard case."

"You 'd better furnish the whiskey this time ; they all expect it," suggested Mr. Oakleaf, in a low tone.

"Do you hold your tongue, Reuben," cried Salome, nursing her baby. "It would be just like me to furnish whiskey, or any thing else that would get my work done ; but I believe in letting others do as they 've a mind to."

"And reflect," rejoined Ironthorpe, — "don't do this or that because I say do it : question your conscience. You can safely follow that."

"My conscience says whiskey is a fiend," said William, with manly decision ; "it says, too, 'Be true to principle at all hazards.' I will tell my friends so."

He went out, followed by Ironthorpe and Mr. Oakleaf at a short distance. Rebecca and Salome listened in the door-way.

X XIII.

WHISKEY AND WATER.

WILLIAM called to his friends. They stopped work, and approached the log-heap on which he had mounted. The oxen stood panting in the sun, and the heavy chains lay like snakes along the ground.

The company greeted Ironthorpe with respect and pleasure, then turned to hear what William had to say.

“Where ’s the whiskey?” asked Solomon Pangborn, who was the spokesman of the rum party.

William seemed to hesitate. He glanced around on the expectant faces of his neighbors, as if considering what to do. At length, he called to Rebecca.

“Bring down the jug,” he cried; “be quick.”

"I thought he 'd come to 't!" observed Mr. Oakleaf, triumphantly.

"You have not yet seen the end," answered Ronthorpe, with a smile.

The rum party manifested its approval by cheering, and seating themselves on the log-leap in comfortable postures for enjoying the whiskey. Rebecca brought the jug, together with two tin dippers and a pail of water. She looked sorrowfully at her husband as she handed him the whiskey, as if disappointed in his greatness of heart.

"Give me the jug," cried Mr. Pangborn, in a harsh voice.

"To me first," said William, mildly. "Take away the dippers and the pail."

"A speech! a speech!"

"Yes, a little speech, if you please, my good friends. I produce this whiskey to show you that I am not niggardly of expense."

William was interrupted by cheers.

"Don't yell so, boys," remarked Mr. Pangborn. "You start the oxen."

"Wait a few minutes at all events," resumed William. "Then perhaps you will give me roars instead of cheers."

He went on, pronouncing as neat and pointed a little speech as was ever heard in the back-woods. He made a full confession of principle, and declared his determination to do what he thought right.

"This," he said in conclusion, "is all the whiskey I am owner of to-day; and as I know of no good use to which it can be put, I mean now to dispose of it in a way which will leave no doubt in your minds with regard to my firm belief in the principle I have laid down."

So saying, he inserted the nose of the jug, in an inverted position, between two logs, and held it with his feet while the whiskey gurgled out and the air rushed in alternately.

The outcry against this demonstration was tremendous. Mr. Pangborn had been a good friend of the Norburns as long as it had been for his interest to be so; but now he would have rushed to a personal combat with his neighbor had not Ironthorpe restrained his ardor.

"Wait and hear him out," said the preacher, in a mild, firm tone.

William resumed his speech. He expressed a warm desire for peace and friendship. But he expected some of his neighbors would leave

him, nor had he taken the step which displeased them without counting the cost. He was sorry to give offence ; yet though desertion and destitution should be the result, he must respect his manhood, and do what he knew to be right.

“Now you know me ; you know what stuff I am made of,” he continued. “If any one can still be my friend, and respect my principles, he will find in me a person on whom he can depend. I shall regret to have a single one of my neighbors leave me for conscience’ sake ; yet whatever may be the result, I shall be comforted by something in my breast, which says, ‘You have done well.’”

“And now, friends and neighbors ! here is my hand, — my heart goes with it to all who will stand by me. Who will take it ? ”

“I will,” cried Allan Birch.

“Don’t you touch it ! ” roared Mr. Pangborn, in a rage. “ ’T was n’t any thing but water in the jug. It ’s all a sham.”

“My friend,” said Ironthorpe, “see if it was water. Satisfy yourself,” — handing him the jug. “You all know that it was whiskey William Norburn emptied out upon the ground. You know, too, that it is a love of justice and

virtue which has driven him to take this step. And have you forgotten what I have so often told you about the necessity of every man living a true life and respecting the manhood of his neighbor? Does not something in your hearts tell you that William Norburn has this day acted nobly? Shall he be a martyr to the truth? And will you play the part of persecutors?"

This appeal had the desired effect. Five of the men — the first of whom was Allan Birch, and the last Mr. Oakleaf — came forward and took William's hand, pledging their friendship and aid. Rebecca was thrilled with joy at her husband's noble triumph, and Salome openly expressed her approbation.

Only two persons stood out. One of these was Mr. Pangborn. The other was Mr. Furbush, the hero of one of the early chapters of our story, who had recently become a neighbor of the Norburns. To the latter Ironthorpe addressed himself in an impressive manner.

"Have you forgotten the night last February, when liquor led you to the very door of death? Do you remember nothing of the situation in which I found you, when I carried you back to

Hackler's tavern? Has such an experience taught you no deep lesson?"

"I don't get drunk now," replied Furbush, doggedly. "I drink moderate; fact, I can't work without it. A little keeps me up."

"A little takes you down sometimes," observed Miles Haney, good-humoredly. "How long have you been at work for Jerome Kingsley?"

"Ever since April."

"Since April, then, you have been drunk fifteen times, — I have it on good authority. Mr. Kingsley himself told me. He says he's afraid he won't be able to keep you, you will drink so every time you have a chance."

Furbush reddened with shame through the soot which darkened his face. Ironthorpe thought it doubtful whether the manner in which Miles had spoken could be productive of any good; but, as luck would have it, the exposure of Furbush disgusted Mr. Pangborn with his company, and decided him to go over to the majority.

"Here's my hand, neighbor Norburn," he said, in a voice almost choked with passion.

"The fewer words on the subject the better."

"Well, I don't know but it's about so," added Furbush, following in a different spirit. "I confess," he added, heartily, "whiskey ain't no friend of mine. I mean to break off drinking; and I may as well begin to-day."

"I am glad to see this respect for principle, and this union of hands, at such a time," said Ironthorpe. "It may not be long before a more serious occasion than a logging-bee will bring you together in self-defence."

He related what he knew about the war. In that region, where there were no mails, no newspapers, and only chance travellers, the intelligence was eagerly devoured by the assembled backwoodsmen. Great was the excitement occasioned thereby; and in the ebullition of political feeling attendant upon the discussions which ensued, the difficulty which had been so near dividing the company was quite forgotten.

Ironthorpe made a speech to the men over their luncheon and water, advising them what to do, and promising to return to them in a few days with what news he could obtain of the enemy's movements on the frontier.

With Salome's assistance Rebecca got a grand dinner for the men that day, and all went away apparently satisfied.

"I shall believe in cold water after this," said Allan Birch. "I never was at a bee where whiskey was used, where so much work was done by so few hands, and in such double-quick time."

As for William, he was elated with the result of his noble declaration of principle, and Rebecca, — she had never before loved her husband with such entire devotion.

Ironthorpe passed the night with the Norburns, at their earnest solicitation, and proceeded on his journey early the following morning.

XXIV.

"WAR TIME."

FOR a time the frontier was undisturbed. But at length came the alarming intelligence, that the British were preparing to make an attack upon the settlements from Lake Ontario; and the militia were warned out to oppose the landing of an armed force at the mouth of Genesee River.

This was in the month of August. The settlements were thrown into commotion, and a great deal of unnecessary excitement prevailed. Wives saw their husbands go forth to meet the enemy, scarcely expecting ever to behold them again.

Among others Mr. Oakleaf and William Norburn "rushed to their country's rescue." Poor Rebecca, more distressed than she had ever been in her life, accompanied her husband on

the morning of his departure as far as Mr. Oakleaf's house, where he expected to meet some more of his neighbors "going to the war."

"Good morning," cried Reuben, who was very pale, standing in the door of his log-house. "So we 've got to go, I suppose? It's pretty business, for gover'nment to be sacrificing human life in this way."

"Fiddlestick's end!" exclaimed Salome, appearing with her babe in her arms. "Did you ever see such a coward in all your life, Becky?"

"No, no, no! don't say coward. 'T ain't that I'm wanting in courage," said Mr. Oakleaf, trying to look brave. "Give me a just cause, and you'll see. But this shameful disregard for the peace of the country, — it does go agin' the grain to go and shed my blood at such a call."

"I am as good a Federalist as any man," replied William. "I don't much fancy the notion of hurrying the country into war, — you know that; but since our homes are threatened, we must defend them."

"That's the way to talk!" responded Salome. "I believe Reuben would run away, and

leave me with Timmy and the baby, 'fore he'd lift a finger to defend us, if he could do it."

"No, no, no, now you 're wrong, Mrs. O.," cried Reuben, nervously. "If the cause was a just one ——"

"If you was n't afraid, you mean," retorted Salome. "I tell ye what, Becky! If 'twas n't for my baby, I'd put on the trousers, and go myself in Reub's place. If I could n't face a pa'cel of red-coats without looking as pale as he looks now, I'd — no matter! Timmy, don't you want to go and fight, and let your papa stay at home?"

"Yes, by George!" cried Timmy, stiffening his upper lip, and giving his head a defiant shake. "*I* would n't be afraid, *would* I?"

At that moment a puppy Salome had recently obtained of Mr. Pangborn jumped upon the boy's legs, when, with a sudden change of manner, he began to scream and run as if for his life.

"Oh! oh! don't let him!" he cried, taking refuge behind his mother.

"Just like his father, for all the world," sneered Salome. "Clear out, you little coward. Don't be tagging on to my dress, or I'll let Dickey eat you up."

In a short time Miles Haney arrived, with his good-natured face, and begged of Salome and Rebecca to visit his wife, and do something to console her during his absence. Soon after, another backwoodsman made his appearance, and in good spirits the men set out on their expedition together. Reuben had by this time grown quite courageous, in consequence either of the increasing numbers, or of the drams Salome had made him drink behind the door, in order that she might not be ashamed of his conduct.

I will not attempt to describe Rebecca's feelings as she returned through the woods to her lonely hut. Ironthorpe was away, and she had no friend to whom to look for comfort.

As she approached her deserted home, the fawn, jumping out of its little pen, ran to meet her. This was now her only companion, and as she embraced it, she suffered her emotions to overcome her, and bathed its neck with tears.

But it was not her nature to give way to despondency. The days were long and lonesome, the nights were dark and dreary; — O so dark and dreary ! — during her husband's absence ; but all the time her young heart was full of hope and faith and love.

She saw Salome frequently ; and Mrs. Haney, who now lived in a fine log-house Miles had built on a lot about a mile east of Mr. Norburn's, used to come up to the palace to spend the night, accompanied by Miles junior. Rebecca never saw too much of Mrs. Oakleaf, who was always blunt, kind, and cheerful ; but, although generally well enough pleased to see Matilda coming through the woods at the approach of night-fall, she was invariably rejoiced when that sour, and discontented woman took her departure in the morning.

Still her principal companion was the fawn. It followed her everywhere with singular fidelity ; and she loved it with maternal fondness. She had never supposed that she could become so attached to any dumb creature ; and little indeed had she dreamed, when William brought home the forest prize for a present to her, that it would ever prove such a source of happiness. But it was also destined to prove a source of grief.

One forenoon — the fourth, I think it was, of William's absence — she went down to the brook for water. Since the midsummer days began, the stream had dwindled to a slender

thread which trickled over the roots and stones, and Rebecca was obliged to fill her pail very carefully from a basin of pebbles Ironthorpe had constructed to answer the purpose of a well. Whilst she was engaged in dipping up the water, the fawn bounded from her side, and capered playfully over the hill.

Suddenly Rebecca heard a gun. Her heart bounded, for she hoped it was William's signal, on his return. At all events, she thought, if it was not her husband, it must be some one who could bring her more definite news of him than she had yet received.

She ran in the direction of the report, and saw a man down in the hollow, deliberately reloading his gun. By his side stood a horse, saddled and bridled, and at his feet lay the fawn, shot dead.

Rebecca sprang forward with a cry of pain. She caught the pet in her arms, and embraced it with passionate grief, trying to stop the blood which gushed from a great wound in its neck.

"You have killed my pet fawn!" she cried, in a tone of anguish. "My darling Nannie! Oh! how could you do it?"

"How should I know the thing was tame?" answered the man, gruffly.

The voice made Rebecca shudder. She had heard it before, and she had hoped never hear it again.

"Come," resumed Brusley, after a pause, "there 's no use making a great fuss over the thing, now it 's dead. Supposing I dress it for you?"

Rebecca made no reply, but sobbed while Nannie's head clasped close to her breast.

"See its eyes!" she articulated at length. "They look so full of agony! She is n't dead yet."

"Yes she is too; I 'll answer for that. Their eyes always look so. Them 's as reg'lar dead eyes as ever I see. Is this your house on the hill?"

Gradually Rebecca recovered her self-possession; when, laying Nannie's head upon the ground, she discovered that her hands and dress were wet with blood. Without a word she arose, and, returning to the brook, washed herself, sobbing unrestrainedly.

When she went up to the house with her pail of water, she found Brusley there before her. Seated upon a log by the door, he was skinning the poor pet fawn, which he had dragged;

from the hollow. Near by stood his horse, fastened to a tree, and browsing upon the green leaves.

"Have ye got any corn?" asked Brusley, as she appeared.

Rebecca made no reply, but carried her pail mechanically into the house, and placed it upon the log by the door.

"'Cause if you have," he added, loud enough for her to hear, "I want some for my horse."

Rebecca could not have refused this charity to a dumb beast under any circumstances. There was a bag of corn at the head of the bed, which William had bought to feed his oxen while using them on the fallow, and carried two miles through the woods on his back.

Notwithstanding the scarcity of the article, and the circumstances under which it was obtained, and the character of Brusley, Rebecca filled her apron with ears, and, emptying them into a tub, fed the horse with her own hands.

"That 's like!" said Brusley. "But I guess he wants water first,—the crick is so low he could n't get a sip."

So saying, he left the fawn, and, taking the pail of water Rebecca had just brought, gave

it to the horse to drink. Too sorrowful to be indignant at such an instance of audacity, she quietly took the empty pail, and returned to fill it once more at the brook.

"I 'm sorry about the fawn," observed Brusley, watching her with his brutal eye as she reappeared. "'F I 'd only know'd 't was tame, — but I could n't know that, of course. I say, young woman, can't you get me some dinner? I 'm as nigh starved as ever a fellar was in the world. That 's one thing made me so hasty shooting the fawn."

"It ran right up to you, and you shot it down!" burst from Rebecca's lips. "You must have seen it was tame. It is too bad!"

Brusley protested.

"But that 's neither here nor there. Believe me or not," he added, doggedly. "Will you get me some dinner? I tell you I 'm starving."

Something whispered in her ear, "Return good for evil." She said nothing, but set about kindling a fire in her out-door fire-place.

"Pork?" cried Brusley, in the course of a quarter of an hour, looking up from his work.

"No," said Rebecca; "it is bear's meat. Shall I fry some for you?"

"Bear's meat is good ; frying is good. But there 's other kinds o' meat I like better, and br'iled is better 'n fried. Have ye got a grid-iron ? "

Rebecca produced the article.

"That 's like ! Now put these slices of fresh venison over the fire. The fawn was n't fat, but I guess it 'll be tender."

This was almost too much for Rebecca's Christian temper. There was a struggle in her breast,—a brief one ; and choking back her heart that swelled into her throat, she placed the venison upon the gridiron.

"Cook enough for yourself too," said Brusley, with a leer.

Rebecca turned from him with a feeling of disgust. She could cook a morsel of her own pet fawn for the ruffian who had murdered it,—she could do this for humanity's sake, but taste the flesh herself she could not.

Brusley ate voraciously, and, his appetite being satisfied, he begun to grow exceedingly good-natured and friendly towards his hostess. His coarse familiarity filled her with loathing, and she was relieved when he shoved back from the table, — thinking he would go and leave her

then. But he only wished to light his pipe; after which ceremony he tipped back against the wall, prepared for a comfortable smoke.

"You have company, I see, Mrs. Norburn," said a well-remembered voice at the door.

"O Mr. Ironthorpe!" was all Rebecca could say, as she sprung to meet her friend, and, weeping, hid her face upon his shoulder.

The preacher entered, and presently Mr. Brusley, beginning to feel the hut uncomfortably warm, took his departure,—riding off without so much as thanking Rebecca for all she had done for him.

"Glorious heart!" exclaimed Ironthorpe, when she told her story, "this Christian spirit is more precious in the sight of Heaven than all the splendors of the world. Thank that hard man for kindling a little fire which, though painful, has done much towards refining the gold of your nature. And now let me cheer your sorrowful soul with good news."

XXV.

FLYING FROM THE INDIANS.

IRONTHORPE had seen William, who was alive and well. The British had not attempted a landing at the mouth of the Genesee, but, after threatening the shore for a day or two, had fired a farewell shot and quietly withdrawn. There was no more necessity for the militia to remain under arms, and William and his companions were on their way home.

This intelligence made Rebecca forget all her troubles. In the course of the day her husband himself appeared, in capital health and spirits, and her cup of happiness was full to overflowing.

The poor fawn, — for many days she mourned for it in secret ; but she had one source of consolation : William, who found the meat excellent, ate it without the least prejudice,

declaring that his wife had never cooked any thing so nicely in her life.

Ironthorpe was off again. A few days of unalloyed happiness followed, and William was getting on finely with his fallow; when once more the settlements were threatened. This time it was on the Western frontier, and the militia were ordered to muster at Lewiston on Niagara River.

Mr. Norburn went with all his neighbors,—with two exceptions. Mr. Furbush, who had recently hired out to Miles Haney, was exempt from military duty, having lost the forefinger of his right hand in a drunken spree some ten years before. The other exception was Mr. Reuben Oakleaf.

This courageous individual had also been prevented, by a slight accident of a date[•] rather more recent, from going to meet the enemy of his country. On returning from the mouth of the Genesee, he had made a logging-bee. As the season was advancing, and he was in a great hurry to clear his fallow, he was resolved to have things done by steam. He accordingly furnished whiskey in abundance for his friends, who pretty generally got drunk, and did about

one half as much work as they had done at William's bee, when sober. This was not the worst of it, however. Mr. Oakleaf himself, when oscillating in that indescribable state which lies like a misty valley between the calm uplands of sobriety and the miry swamps of intoxication, had entangled his left leg in a log-chain, and been dragged with a load of rubbish several yards along the ground. Thanks to William Norburn, who, being about the only clear-headed man in the fallow, sprang to the rescue and stopped the oxen, Reuben escaped with a few bad bruises and a slight fracture, from a situation which endangered his life. Salome accused her husband of getting hurt purposely, in order to avoid shedding his blood in the less noble cause of his country, in case the militia should again be called out ; but we have every reason to suppose that, on this point, his good lady labored under a trifling misapprehension.

So William was off again ; and Rebecca had been alone three days, when an alarm spread through the settlement. It was rumored that a band of Indians, having crossed the frontier in spite of the vigilance of those whose affair it

was to prevent such a calamity, were sweeping across the country, destroying property and life without mercy.

It was in the forenoon of a sultry day when Mr. Furbush brought the startling news to Rebecca.

"The savages are upon us!" he cried, running up the hill, out of breath. "Hurry down to Mrs. Haney's as fast as you can. Take what things you set most by, and can carry handiest."

"But — how — what is to be done?" articulated Rebecca, terror-stricken.

"I've yoked the ox-team to Mr. Pangborn's cart," replied Furbush; "every thing is ready for flight. I'm going to warn Mrs. Pangborn; all the neighbors will join us at Mrs. Haney's, as soon as they know the danger."

"Will you be with us?" asked Rebecca, instinctively looking for the protection of a man.

"As soon as I can get around. I'm on my way to Allan Birch's settlement, to find out which way the Indians are coming."

So saying, Furbush ran down on the other side of the hill, and Rebecca was left alone.

She was much agitated at first ; but gradually she calmed herself, feeling that nothing could happen to her without the knowledge of the all-loving Father.

With what misgivings did she then prepare to desert her little palace ! The humble home where she had commenced life so strangely, where she had enjoyed so much in the midst of so many privations, — she was leaving it, perhaps never to see its lowly roof again. And her husband, — with what bleeding hopes did she think of him !

But Rebecca was a practical little body, with all her delicacy of feeling. On the present occasion her prudence was rather amusing. Hot as was the weather, she put on all her dresses, one over the other, as the most convenient way of carrying them. Her silver spoons she secured in the pocket of one of her petticoats ; and having concealed a number of articles in the wood-pile, where they would be safe — as she somehow imagined — when the house was burned, she lifted a bundle containing William's wedding-coat and a few additional valuables tied up in three aprons, and, going mournfully out, fastened the door behind her.

Almost melted with the heat of the weather and the weight of her burden of clothes, Rebecca presented a decidedly ludicrous appearance on her arrival at Mrs. Haney's. Two of her neighbors were already there, waiting anxiously — with the oxen and cart before the door — for the return of Furbush ; but at sight of her they for the moment quite forgot their fears.

“ Why, it 's Becky Norburn ! ” cried one, “ sure 's you 're alive. ”

“ I thought it was the fat old witch that used to live in Whitestown, ” said the other.

“ What *have* you got on ? ” asked the first speaker, smothering with mirth, as Rebecca approached the house.

“ I don't see how any one can laugh at such a time, ” sighed Mrs. Hancy, who sat in the cart, holding Miles in her arms, and rocking herself despairingly to and fro. “ O dear ! O dear ! To think our husbands should go off and leave us when the Indians are coming ! Miley, Miley, what will become of you ? How could your papa do so ? ”

In answer to this appeal, the feelings of young Miles, who was almost big enough to take

care of his mother himself, burst forth afresh, and a dismal bellow of grief made the woods ring.

"I — don't — know!" he articulated, clinging to his mother's neck.

"Poor, dear Miley! poor, dear, forsaken Miley!" sobbed his mother, rocking him more desperately than ever. "What will become of us without your papa?"

Rebecca joined the other women, and laughed until the vast bundle of clothes she wore shook convulsively. Meanwhile her face was glowing red, and the sweat was pouring from it in streams. Mrs. Haney looked at her reproachfully.

"I can't help it," said Rebecca, unable to restrain herself. "This is all so ridiculous, I should laugh if I were to die for it."

It was indeed a ludicrous scene, — Matilda with her booby son sitting upon the goods with which the cart was filled, — one of the women looking out of the door of the log-house, and the other, with a goad in her hand, standing, ready for a start, at the oxen's heads, while they quietly chewed the cud. Moreover, Rebecca felt that she herself was not the least laughable figure in the group.

Soon after, Mrs. Pangborn appeared with her entire family of children. Rebecca at first thought the savages themselves were coming, they made such a clamor in the woods.

"Hillo! I guess I'll ride!" cried one of the boys, taking a loaf of bread from under his arm, and placing it upon a stump, then diving at the cart.

"Bah — bah — bah!" whined Billy, mocking Miles. "Who's a baby?"

"Go 'long, you old oxen!" pealed forth the shrill voice of Daniel, who had climbed into the cart.

"Whoa!" cried Matilda. "Do you get off them wheels this instant! Boys, do you hear? Daniel, get right down."

"That's pa's cart," said Hannah, climbing up behind, with the assistance of her brother's leg. "I guess we've got a right to ride."

"Oh!" yelled Dan, kicking; "you'll pull me off!"

To save himself, he reached up and collared Miles, who began to shriek.

"Let go, you scamp!" exclaimed Mrs. Haney, seizing the offender by the hair.

Daniel did let go, but it was to lay hold of the

hand which had become entangled in his hair. Bringing the hostile member down to his mouth, as if to kiss it gallantly, he inflicted a bite which left upon it the distinct prints of two rows of good front teeth, like a parenthesis. Matilda cried out with pain, and fell to beating him with her fists in an energetic manner. Meanwhile the rest of the children piled themselves into the cart, swarming up from behind to attack their ancient enemy.

"Keep 'em off, or I shall hurt some of 'em," cried the exasperated Matilda, choking Daniel over a bag of potatoes, with her fingers once more intertwined in his hair. "I will defend my Miley!"

Mrs. Pangborn replied with high indignation, that the cart belonged to her husband, and that her family had a right to it.

"But the oxen belong to us and the Norburns," retorted Matilda. "What's the cart without oxen?"

"Take the oxen off," said Mrs. Pangborn. "I won't have any thing in common with you. Give me my cart!"

In vain Rebecca and the others interfered. While Matilda, who had the advantage of posi-

tion over the belligerent family, was beating them off with might and main, Mrs. Pangborn put down her baby, which was squalling dreadfully, and hastened to take possession of her property, by detaching the ox-team. Not being accustomed to the business, she committed a small blunder, disjoining the cart-box from the tongue, instead of removing the hammer which held the chain.

The result was startling. The cart-box tipped up suddenly, spilling both families, with the loaded goods, in one astonishing heap. Matilda plunged down head foremost, rolling Daniel under her like a cylinder, while Miles followed, hugging the bag of potatoes, and screaming with terror: Hannah, Billy, and Josh sending forth discordant cries from the bottom of the heap.

To increase the confusion, the oxen started to run, dragging the empty cart-box along the uneven ground. Fortunately they ran their two heads on each side of a tree, and the yoke stopped them with a jerk.

XXVI.

TRAGEDY AND COMEDY.

THE two families were still engaged in a pitched battle, in the midst of the pots and pans, bedding, clothing, and provisions which had been spilled from the cart, when the cry of "Indians!" speedily terminated the struggle.

"O Lord save us!" gasped Matilda, as she caught up Billy in her arms, mistaking him for Miles.

Discovering the error, she dropped him in disgust. Meanwhile the children's screams were hushed; and now they ran panic-stricken this way and that, striking their heads together, and stumbling over the goods in great confusion.

"T ain't the Indians, after all," observed Mrs. Clark, with humor sparkling in her eyes.

"You gave the alarm to frighten us," said

Matilda, pale and out of breath. "There ain't nobody coming."

"Yes, there is. But it's nobody but the Oakleafs."

"Salome, walking and driving," cried Rebecca, "and Mr. Oakleaf riding on the sleigh-bottom, with his broken leg and the baby!"

"And Timmy holding on to one of the stakes behind," added Mrs. Clark.

The new-comers were hailed with acclamations, as the sleigh came up, grinding hard along the dry ground.

"This is all nonsense, I say," remarked Salome, with a disgusted look, reining up the old Johnnies. "The idea of flying from the Indians with an ox-cart and an old sleigh!"

"Mrs. O., Mrs. O.!" exclaimed Reuben. "You know there is danger, and our lives depend upon your exertions. Don't delay an instant. The savages will have our scalps in ten minutes."

Mr. Oakleaf spoke in an excited manner, — being naturally anxious about the safety of his family. Furthermore, he was very pale, — in consequence, doubtless, of his broken leg. Salome only sneered.

"But an ox-cart and a sleigh!" she said.
"If we must fly, we should do much better to leave such rubbish behind."

"Leave the sleigh behind? And me on it?" ejaculated Reuben. "And I can't walk a step! I charge you, Mrs. O., don't desert — I mean, don't desert the team!"

"Why didn't you say, '*don't desert me,*' and done with it?" sneered his wife.

"Will the Indians eat us?" inquired Timmy.

"Yes, if you don't look sharp, and hold your tongue. What are you going to do, Mrs. Haney? Run away, or stay at home?"

"We are waiting for Furbush, to know what to do."

"Take my advice," cried Reuben, from the sleigh, "and drive through the woods as fast as ever you can. Now don't hesitate. Our lives are in peril. If I was only a well man!" he added, in a tone of self-excuse. "But I can't fight."

The women held a consultation, and decided to get the cart once more in readiness, and wait for farther intelligence.

"Shall I lift you off the sleigh?" asked Salome of her husband.

"No, no!" cried Reuben, hurriedly, frightened at the thought of being left in the hurry of flight. "I'll stick to the conveyance. And now promise me one thing, Mrs. O. Don't desert the old Johnnies."

Mrs. Clark backed the oxen round, and Mrs. Pangborn, to appease Matilda's anger, helped her load up the goods. All things being prepared, the company waited and waited for Furbush.

At noon they lunched, and Mr. Oakleaf, rigidly adhering to the sleigh, ate a slice of cold ham and three slices of bread, not because he was hungry, but as a precaution against starvation. Still Furbush was absent.

"He has been killed and scalped by them pesky Indians!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Oakleaf, with a wild look. "We'd better start at once."

Salome was opposed to such a proceeding, and the party delayed three hours longer. Rebecca all this time was roasting in her accumulation of clothes; but she was as fearful of losing them if she took them off, as Reuben was of losing his life if he forsook the sleigh.

The children quarrelled, while the women

sometimes fretted, and sometimes chatted good-naturedly. Rebecca did much to keep up hope and good feeling among her companions, by her cheerful example. But the day dragged heavily, and at five o'clock the party had given Furbush up for lost.

They had scarcely formed this conclusion, when the individual in question made his appearance, carrying a jug, and staggering along the forest road.

"Drunk as a fool!" exclaimed Mrs. Haney. "I declare I'm sorry the Indians did n't catch him! Here he has left us all day in an agony of suspense, and now he comes home drunk!"

"There, he has stopped," said Rebecca. "He is ashamed to be seen."

"He has stopped to take a drink," observed Reuben, indignantly. "He deserves death at the hands of the savages."

"See how deliberately he lifts the jug to his lips for a long swig!" exclaimed Mrs. Pangborn. "I wish I was good at throwing stones, and had a good stone to throw."

This hint was enough for her pugnacious children, who thereupon run to attack Furbush with a volley of sticks. The inebriate threat-

ened them with the jug, as he reeled this way and that, approaching the house like a ship beating into port against the wind.

The women overwhelmed him with questions and reproaches.

"Forgive me, my adored Mrs. Whitestown," he said, confounding Mrs. Clark's name with that of the place she came from; "forgive me, my dear, kind friends all," speaking in maudlin accents, and bursting into a flood of tears. "I ha'n't seen nary Ingin, but I fell in with an old acquaintance, — I mean, with this 'ere jug of good stuff —"

"I declare, that 's my jug!" exclaimed Salome.

"Blessed woman, it is!" said Furbush, much affected, throwing his arms around Salome's neck. "Don't — don't misun'stand me," he added, as she pushed him off with her strong arm, — "don't, for the worl'! I remembered this ex'len' whickskey we had such a good time over at the log'ng-bee, and could n't resist the temptation of shaking hands with 't, when I called 't your house and found nobody there but the puppy tied t' the bed-post. O my beloved friends!" articulated the scout with great diffi-

culty, weeping tipsily, "I throw myself on your 'ndulgence. We will all die together like men !"

"Furbush, Furbush !" cried Reuben, exasperated, "this is too much. Mrs. O., if you please, break that jug over his head."

"You may !" said the inebriate, humbly. "I deserve it. I shall feel b'er after it ; I shall feel b'er."

He intended to say that he should feel better ; but liquor so thickened his speech, that he was unable to bring up any distinct sound of the missing consonant.

"Have you seen any thing of the Indians ?" demanded Mrs. Haney.

"Ex'len' creature, no !" replied Furbush, embracing her, "I have not."

"Don't touch me !"

She spit at him — if the expression be admissible in a figurative sense — very much after the manner of cats, leaving marks of nails upon his face. Thereupon he began to weep again profusely, sprawling down upon the ground in an attitude of the deepest dejection, and mopping his face with his sleeve.

"Have n't you heard of the Indians ?" asked Rebecca.

In answer to this question, the poor fellow made a statement of the most alarming character. He said he had heard savage yells in the woods, and seen the smoke of a great fire in the direction of Allan Birch's house. How long ago these startling things had occurred, he could not say,—it might have been half an hour, or it might have been four hours,—but about the yells and the smoke he was positive.

The company were thrown into a great commotion by this intelligence. Mrs. Haney declared that she had seen a cloud which looked like the smoke of burning houses, but that she had forborne to mention it, out of consideration for her more timid companions; and Reuben remembered, with a frightened air, that he had heard sounds which corresponded with the savage yells in the scout's statement.

An indescribable scene of tumult ensued. Mrs. Clark "whoa-hush-hoyed" the oxen round, and the women and children scrambled into the cart. Salome herself, a little startled, reined the old Johnnies into the road, waking them up with the whip.

"I charge you," cried Reuben, in great perturbation, "don't leave me and the baby under

any circumstances. Remember I can't help myself. And if I should fall off the sled, going through the hollows and over the logs, for God's sake, stop and pick me up ! ”

“ Are you going to leave me to perish alone ? ” asked Furbush, making a vain attempt to regain his feet. “ Do, my good, kind friends, give me a ride on your sled.”

“ No, no ! ” cried Reuben. “ The old Johnnies have load enough for bare ground. You must walk.”

“ I can't,” snivelled Furbush, pitifully. “ I've lost the forefinger of my right han', which disables me from doing military duty ; and if you leave me here at the mercy of savages, I'll have you up for mur'r,” — meaning murder.

What an occasion for the display of selfishness ! Matilda, wild with fear, thought only of herself and Miles. Others manifested a similar feeling in a less degree. Only Rebecca seemed to take pity on the inebriate ; but a word from her called out the human sympathies of Salome, who helped the wretched man to get upon the sled.

Reuben was expostulating against this pro-

ceeding in a violent manner, when a fresh arrival changed the aspect of affairs.

"It is Mr. Ironthorpe!" cried Rebecca, with a thrill of joy.

The preacher came up, and, smiling at the ludicrous scene which was presented, assured his friends that there was no immediate danger.

"But the Indians have burnt Allan Birch's house!" exclaimed Reuben.

"I came almost direct from Allan Birch's, and I suppose I should have known it, if the house was burning," replied Ironthorpe. "I do not think there are any Indians within twenty miles of the settlement."

"Then what do you advise?"

"That you should turn about your teams, and stay at home."

Joy took the place of fear, and a merry scene followed. Rebecca diverted her female friends by taking off her clothes, one article after another, in the privacy of Matilda's kitchen, until she was left only in her ordinary dress, more suitable for sultry summer weather than the heap of apparel she had worn since morning.

Afterwards she returned home, accompanied

by Ironthorpe, and found the house precisely in the condition in which she had left it. Not an article had been moved, the door-fastening had not been touched, and the things she had hidden in the wood-pile were undisturbed.

Many reasons had Rebecca for feeling thankful to Providence that night, not the least among which was the news Ironthorpe communicated concerning William, who was safe and well, and had risen to the rank of captain.

XXVII.

REBECCA'S BABY.

IN a week the militia returned to their homes, having found nothing whatever to do on the frontier, except to tell stories, go through with their daily exercise, crack jokes upon each other, and take turns "standing guard." These duties they performed with unimpeachable bravery, happily unconscious of the mischief threatened by the Indian detachment, which had made a hasty dash upon the settlements, and as hastily retired, without doing any damage worth mentioning.

Captain Norburn and his neighbors hoped they had seen the last of military service at Lewiston. They went industriously to work, putting in their fall wheat, and preparing for winter; but it was not long before they were hurried away to Buffalo, where their experience

it differ materially from that already dead.

In length Captain Norburn retired to his farm, to leave it no more for the glories of war. His ambition was quite satisfied, and forthwith he desired nothing greater or nobler than a peaceful life of love and labor with Rebecca, in their humble home.

"We are getting on so nicely!" wrote the wife to her mother. "Mr. Ironthorpe has been with us a good deal, and you don't know what a help he has been to William on the mill. He refuses to take any pay, and only asks for a few miles, and says he wants nothing of us but our love, when we speak of it. Yesterday he determined to do something for him, and he told him to leave his coat in the house, when he went out to chop. Then I went to work, and mended every place where there was a hole to be taken, besides putting neat patches on his elbows. When he came in and looked at me, he did not say any thing, but O such a look as he gave me! I wish I could hold up his pantaloons now and then; but they are made of stout buckskin, and when they give out in any place, he takes a needle

and thread from his wallet, and mends them himself.

“ William proposed to the meeting last Sunday, which was held at Mr. Birch’s, as usual, that Mr. Ironthorpe should be hired to preach for us regularly this winter, and afterwards settled over a congregation here, as soon as we get rich enough to support a minister. All agreed to it, except Mr. Ironthorpe himself. ‘I will preach for you when I can,’ said he, ‘asking no pay, except such things as I need when I am with you. When you are able to support a minister, choose some man who is bound by the ties of home, and cannot do the work I do. For my part, I must go from you as soon as you find another to fill my place.’ It makes me very sad to think of this; for I get you don’t know how much comfort and strength from the good man’s conversation and preaching; yet I feel that it would be selfish to wish to keep him always here.

“ Our cow has come in just at the right time to furnish us milk this winter. William drew some hay from Mr. Pangborn’s last week, and Mr. Ironthorpe has built a shed on the west end of the house, for her accommodation. She

runs in the woods yet, but we keep her calf shut up, so that she will not go far. I milk her, and am learning the calf to drink. She bothers us a good deal running on the fallow ; I don't blame her, though I drive her off twenty times a day. The wheat is beginning to look very handsome, growing up bright and green among the black stumps ; and I suppose she thinks such feed a great treat."

Rebecca went on and wrote a good deal, privately and confidentially, to her mother, about a forthcoming event which was anticipated by her and William with joy and suspense, with tremulous hope and fear. "O ma ! if you could only be here !" she repeated more than once from the depths of her overflowing heart.

But Mrs. Baldwin could not be there to welcome the little wonder into the world. It came almost unattended, mysteriously, in the midst of thanksgiving and suffering and joy.

Such joy ! All the night and all the day the heart of the young mother poured out a full, gushing stream of gratitude for the holy gift Heaven had intrusted to her care. The entire happiness of a lifetime seemed intensified and

centred in those few strange moments of maternal experience.

And the child was humbly born, too,—born in the midst of poverty, privation, and loneliness. Yet, like the mother of the blessed Jesus, Rebecca could rejoice, and feel that the measure of her joy was full. What was the great world to her then? What cared she for riches and honor and grandeur of estate? Her lowly home in the wilderness, her child, her husband, and her God,—she wanted nothing more. Think of it, O ye proud ones, whose hearts are cold and hard! think of it, O ye children of affliction, repining at your lot! think of it, fathers and mothers, everywhere, when infancy entereth your homes, and pray God to make your hearts humble and grateful, and keep them ever tender and green.

The babe was a week old, when Ironthorpe visited the happy parents. Rebecca wept with pleasure at his coming, and asked Mrs. Munsey—the backwoods nurse—to show him the baby.

As Ironthorpe bent over it, tears ran down his manly face like rain.

“Blessed be God! blessed be God!” he

murmured, kissing it. "How beautiful and holy are His laws! For humanity's sake, as well as for yours, Rebecca, I thank Him with my whole soul!"

The young mother hid her face, breathing deeply, and weeping, with ineffable love. Her lips moved in prayer. Ironthorpe heard no murmur therefrom, but he understood the smile that wreathed itself around her mouth.

"Happy woman!" he said, taking her hand, — "happy mother of a young immortal! do you know how you have brought up the past, weeping in visions before my eyes?"

Rebecca gave his hand a warm pressure of sympathy, but made no other reply.

"My heart melts and flows like wax," he continued, in tones of indescribable depth and softness. "I feel as if it were but yesterday that I looked upon the little face of another child, — my own."

"O Mr. Ironthorpe!" Rebecca said, in a rush of sympathy, "you never told me that you had a child."

The preacher remained for a minute with his face bowed between his hands. It was wet when he raised it, and his eyes still glistened;

but his whole countenance was radiant with love.

"I had a child," he replied, in the same subdued voice. "I made it my idol. I said in my pride, 'My son shall be great; he shall write his name upon the heart of the nations; he shall be the delight and glory of my old age.' I worshipped him, and ——"

"And what?" faltered Rebecca.

"I worship God to-day."

Rebecca felt a pang strike through her heart.

"And the child?"

"The child is well, — very well. I am thankful that he is so well. Something more of his history I may tell you to-morrow, or next week, or next year, — not to-day. The tale is somewhat sad."

Rebecca made a motion. Mrs. Munsey placed the babe upon her breast, and she clasped it with wild, convulsive affection.

"I am afraid," she articulated, tremulously, "I am afraid!"

"Afraid?" repeated Ironthorpe.

"O yes! If you — so great and strong — could fall, what can I hope for? I am afraid I shall idolize this gift. How can I help it? If

it was like other babies, there would be no danger; but such a heavenly thing!—O Lord, give me strength!”

Ironthorpe encouraged and cheered her. His discourse was full of sweetness and vitality for her tender soul.

“Alas!” said he at length, “that ever so pure and beautiful a thing as a babe should enter a home unwelcomed! My soul weeps when I think of the sorrow and shame which many an innocent like this has brought with it into the world. O for the time to come when no mother’s heart shall bleed to hear a new cry for bread in her household, — when society shall be so purged of its falsities and wrongs, that every babe shall bring blessings and joy, and never sorrow, into the circle of its kindred! O Lord, hasten — hasten the time!”

Again Rebecca wrote a long letter to her friends at home, which shared the fate of nearly every one she had written before. It was weeks before she had an opportunity to send it; and her young heart ached and ached, during the long delay, to think she had a baby, — such a baby! — and her mother did not know all about it.

XXVIII.

THE COAL OF FIRE.

THE autumn advanced. The nights grew cold and long, and the sun made shorter and shorter journeys through the sky by day.

Then came the fall of the leaf: Glorious October, clad in royal robes of crimson and gold, was passing away, his gorgeous train sweeping in solemn majesty far down the forest aisles.

How often, babe in arm, the happy young mother had sat in the door of her lowly home, and watched with dreamy eyes the flaunting leafy banners, of every conceivable tint of beauty, flaming and fluttering on every bough and branch, while the low, strange anthem of the Wind swelled among the trees !

But the bright hues deadened into brown; the glory of the old year died away. The

Wind became angry, and blew rude and fitful blasts through the wild woods, and rent away the fading vesture flushed October trailed among the trees ; and tossed and heaved their giant tops, until — as Rebecca sat there in the low door of her humble home — it seemed to her that the roar of rushing floods was all around her.

One day, William was gone to a raising, and Rebecca was alone in the woods with her wonderful babe. The sound of the wind seemed to prophesy solemnly of woe, and in the dead, drifting leaves which rustled along the hollows, she seemed to read a sad mystery embosomed in the future. She had been too happy, too confident of the earthly bliss which smiled upon her in her child ; so the phantom Fear stood before her that day, and twice or thrice waved up and down before her eyes his shadowy hand.

But all Rebecca's forebodings were forgotten when she saw Salome coming through the woods, carrying her baby.

" Reuben has taken Timmy off with him to the raising," said Mrs. Oakleaf ; " so I thought I 'd shut up house, and run over and see how your baby is getting on."

"O, you should see it laugh once!" exclaimed Rebecca, with all the enthusiasm of a young mother. "There never was any thing so sweet as its laugh."

"Of course," replied Salome, good-naturedly. "Let us compare."

Rebecca displayed her infant proudly. She knew it was by far the prettiest child that ever was, while her friend's was quite ordinary. She looked to see Salome burst forth in admiration; but Salome only shook her head.

"How puny it is!" she said.

It certainly did look a poor wee thing beside her own plump, hearty child.

"Do you think so?" demanded Rebecca.

She gave her friend such an anxious, eager look, that the latter did not like to express herself fully on the subject. So she only said that it was not indeed such a fine child as she could wish to see, and suggested that the mother was too careful of it.

"Too careful?" queried Rebecca, with an incredulous look. "How can that be?"

"Why, you keep it too close. You always have it bundled up as if it was a piece of toast you wanted to keep hot for supper."

Rebecca smiled, as if she thought toast was nothing to be thought of the same day with her precious baby.

"You should let it creep out doors, and tumble round on the ground," Salome resumed, in her blunt manner; "that 's the way to toughen it. It looks now too much like a potato-vine growing up in a cellar. If it was mine, I 'd have off them wrappers, and put it to play in a sand-heap, as soon as possible."

Rebecca's feelings were a good deal hurt. She felt that Salome could not appreciate her baby, which was an article of so much finer quality than her own, and she did not like to hear her talk so harshly on the subject of toughening it.

Yet the two mothers got on very well together. Rebecca prepared tea, carrying her baby on her hip.

"Do put that child down when you are at work," exclaimed Salome, with some impatience.

"It cries so, if I do!"

"Let it cry. You 'll grow all one-sided, if you carry it in that way many weeks."

"O, I don't all the time," replied Rebecca.

"William often tends it when I am about my housework, and when he is not here, I generally manage to get it asleep. I can't bear to hear it cry."

"Why not?"

"It is so painful. It seems as though it hurt it."

"Hurt it? Nothing does a child so much good as to have a hearty crying-spell once in a while. It strengthens the lungs, — did you know it?"

Rebecca smiled at her friend's philosophy, which might answer very well with strong babies, she thought, but never with such delicate little creatures as her own darling.

When the women were chatting together over the tea-table, a sudden and peculiar sound was heard, like that of an urchin falling and beating the breath out of his body. It was little Timmy Oakleaf, who, running up to the door in a flurry of excitement, had tripped his foot, and pitched headlong into the house.

"Tim Oakleaf, what are you about?" cried his mother. "Get up."

"Afire!" articulated Timmy, scrambling to his feet with a gasp and a bloody nose.

"Afire? what 's afire?"

"The house — all afire — pa dropped a coal from his pipe ——"

Salome caught the boy in her arms, and shook him as if to wake up his senses.

"What are you talking about?" she ejaculated. "Is our house afire?"

Timmy breathlessly declared that it was.

"That 's just like Reub Oakleaf!"

So saying, Salome ran out of the house, leaving her bonnet on the bed and her baby on the floor.

Before Rebecca had fairly recovered from the surprise of Timmy's appearance and Salome's departure, — even while she stood in the door watching the boy trudging as fast as he could after his mother, — William came whistling through the woods. She hastened to tell him what had happened.

"Likely enough!" he exclaimed. "Reuben drank too much whiskey at the raising, — on account of his lame leg, he said. Good by. I 'll be back soon."

William snatched a hasty kiss from the baby's sweet mouth, and started off at full speed in the direction of Mr. Oakleaf's house. Rebec-

ca waited for him with increasing anxiety, — both babies crying nearly all the time, — until the early evening had fallen with deep shadows on the woods.

At length he came, hot and sweaty, completely exhausted with the violence of his exertions.

“O William! you have almost killed yourself,” exclaimed Rebecca, in accents of pain and pity.

She made him sit down almost before he had time to utter a word.

“I hope Reuben has had enough experience in getting tipsy for one season,” he said, wiping his brow. “He has burned his house up this time.”

“O dear! what will they do this winter?”

“I don’t know. I found the house all in a blaze when I got there. Salome was working like a hero to save some of their provisions and furniture, while Reuben flew around like a hen without a head, not knowing any thing what to do. If he ’d been sober, he might have put out the fire in the first place with a pitcher of water.”

Rebecca was painfully interested, as her husband went on to relate all the circumstances connected with the catastrophe.

"We managed to preserve the shed and the stable," he said. "But it was hard work, we had to go so far to the creek for water. I should have brought some of the things got out of the house over with me, if I had n't been so tired."

"I 'm so glad you did n't!" exclaimed Rebecca.

After sitting awhile, he set out to go and milk the cow. But she would not suffer him to leave the house on any account.

"Take care of the babies," said she. "I'll milk old Jenny."

She drove the cow up to the door, where she could milk, and talk with her husband during the operation. She had scarcely finished, when voices were heard coming through the woods.

"It 's Salome and Reuben," whispered William. "He is excusing himself, while she is heaping coals of fire on his head not exactly in the Christian way."

Mr. Oakleaf was the humblest, most dejected man anybody ever saw. He whimpered like a baby, as he entered Captain Norburn's house that eventful night, declaring every five minutes, that, when his leg was broken at the logging-bee, he wished it had been his neck instead.

We will not dwell upon the scene. Of Salome, however, it must be said, that, having allowed her feelings to explode, she gradually softened, and bore up under the affliction with fortitude. She even became quite jocose on the subject, advising William to let a coal drop from his pipe upon one of Rebecca's dresses some day, and burn up his house in that pleasant manner, for the fun of the thing.

"You will find it helps matters along a good deal, if you get tipsy first at a raising, and if your wife happens to be away from home on the occasion."

In answer to this sally, Reuben groaned, and beat his forehead, and wished himself dead again a dozen times.

XXIX.

THE SNOW-STORM.

BLEAK November followed noisily in the train of the departing year. December came upon its track, covering the naked trees, and the dark ground, and the withered and fallen leaves, with a soft, white mantle of snow.

One stormy day Ironthorpe travelled the forest path which led up to Captain Norburn's house. The sky was full of falling snow, and every branch and twig above and around was laden with the clustering flakes. The air was still, and the storm settled down softly upon the wilderness like feathers.

Some weeks had elapsed since the preacher had seen the Norburns. As he approached the house, a feeling of foreboding came down mysteriously upon his heart, — gently and sadly, as the storm descended upon the earth.

Stamping the snow from his feet before the door, and shaking his hat and blanket, he pulled the latch-string and entered. Salome was there, and William was there, and in the corner sat Timmy holding his little brother ; but Ironthorpe saw only Rebecca with her puny baby on her lap.

At sight of him the young mother began to sob, — such sobs ! It was as if some great grief of her heart, which had been swelling up silently and fearfully within, like the waters of a dam, now first burst forth with violence, convulsing her whole frame.

Ironthorpe dropped upon a knee by her side, and, taking her hand in one of his, pressed William's with the other ; looking down calmly at the small, pale face of the puny babe the while, which lay so still and white upon its mother's lap.

"The snow is falling fast outside," he said, in the tenderest tones, — "the snow is falling fast. The summer is over, autumn days have gone by, and the desolation of winter is here."

What was there in those words to bring such sudden mist to William's eyes, — to quicken Rebecca's slow, convulsive sobs, — to cause

Salome to turn away and pass her hand across her face, wetting it with tears ?

“The snow is falling very fast,” repeated Ironthorpe after a pause, with a tremor in his voice, as he watched the almost imperceptible breathing of the babe. “It darkens all the air ; it whitens all the earth. It is cold as the grave ; it is still and cold as death. Yet the snow is full of wonder and beauty : God is in the snow.”

Another pause. The babe lying motionless as a fallen flake ; the mother weeping wildly ; William with bowed head and closed teeth stifling his sobs in his hands ; Salome with blinded eyes, and trembling fingers, and quivering lips, hurriedly sewing up the pocket of Reuben’s coat, mistaking it for a rip.

“God is in the snow, as in the sunshine and the summer rain. It comes with kind intent, even to the little flowers that lie dead — no, not dead, but sleeping — under its feathery tread. It comes with kind intent to us who see the flowers no more, and mourn their loss. The snow is falling very, very fast ; but deathly as it seems, it is a blessing and a friend.”

So saying, Ironthorpe took the mother’s hand

and placed it in her husband's, holding the two together with both of his, above the baby's little breast.

"The snow is falling on your hearts," he continued, still more softly. "I know what it is, — the winter snow falling upon the heart! Thank God, thank God, I know what it is!"

Ironthorpe restrained himself no longer, but wept freely, the tears coursing swiftly and silently down his cheeks, and falling upon the clasped hands of William and Rebecca.

Such sympathy seemed to unlock the mother's heart, who all that day had scarcely spoken a word for grief.

"O, tell me! tell me! is there no way to keep my baby alive?"

Ironthorpe raised his face towards heaven, the tears still streaming, but made no reply.

"I can't give it up, — I can't, I can't!" moaned Rebecca, from a heart writhing with anguish. "My own baby, — I have had it such a little while! — God will not take it from me, — will He, do you think?"

Ironthorpe uttered a brief prayer, into which he poured so much earnestness, so much agony of soul, that it seemed to flow up to the very

gates of heaven. Gradually his countenance brightened, until, when he ceased, it shone with a soft, happy, spiritual light, as if an angel stood behind him looking through.

He had not prayed that the dying child might live. He had not prayed that the parents might be spared that sorrow. He had not prayed selfishly and basely for any worldly gift ; but he had asked that he and they might see and feel and know the Spirit of God in whatever might befall.

" I wish I could,— but I can't see God in this," wailed Rebecca ; " I am afraid I never can."

" I told you I had an idol once," pursued Ironthorpe. " I worshipped it as you have worshiped this. And it went from me as this is going from you. Then I said it was a hard thing. With mad-set teeth and clinched hands, I looked darkly up to heaven, and said it was a hard thing. My eyes were tearless, for the fire within me burnt away every drop of that blessed dew Nature sends to cool and soothe the fevered soul. In those days I knew not God : I knew him not, until, one night, through the thick cloud of my blasphemy and anger there came

to me a vision, and I saw my child looking down upon me, with eyes of pity and love, and heard his sweet voice sing, — ‘The Lord liveth and I live in Him, — the Lord liveth, and I live in Him; blessed be the name of the Lord, which is Love, — blessed be His name, which is Love, for ever and for ever!’ So he sung, and sung again, and continued still to sing, while choirs of angels, circle above circle, in brighter and brighter spheres, took up the strain, chanting harmoniously, with faint and fainter responses, until the last echo seemed to melt like a ripple at the throne of Infinite Love.

“All this time my child drew nearer and nearer, smiling more and more sweetly as it approached, and holding in his hand a long pencil of light like a wand. With this he seemed trying to reach me, and his song appeared to waft him on, like a tide, — until at last he touched my eyes. In an instant my tears gushed forth as the waters did when the prophet smote the rock; but the vision had vanished; and I awoke in the darkness of my chamber, the strains still sounding in my soul, — ‘The Lord liveth, and I live in Him; blessed be His name, which is Love, for ever and for ever!’

“During the day I thought of the vision ; for months, indeed, I thought of nothing else. I was wealthy ; I was in the midst of a gay and flattering society ; but I forgot every thing, even while I bowed and smiled as others bowed and smiled, doing mechanically what I had been accustomed so long to do. At length the light of morning dawned, — I saw the full meaning of the vision, and of the tears which followed it, — I knew and blessed God, and poured out my soul in thanks for the storms which had driven me over that stream of death, whose other shore is life eternal.”

Suddenly Ironthorpe paused. For some moments only the father's half-smothered sobs and the mother's low moan of anguish were heard.

“Rebecca,” said the preacher at length, his eyes fixed upon the babe, that lay so still and white upon her lap, “if I should tell you there is a new angel in heaven to-day, — a fresh and bright young cherub, whose nest was in your heart until God gave it wings to fly to a happier place, where it will wait for you, — would it not be selfish and ungrateful in you to grieve ? ”

“I know it would, — I know it would ! ”

“And you, William, — if you could look

through the clouds of sense, and see your child as I saw mine, would you not rejoice and thank God that he had made you the father of an immortal soul ? ”

“ Yes,” replied William, in a voice broken with affliction, — it was the first time Ironthorpe had heard him speak, — “ I should rejoice and thank God.”

“ O my sister ! O my brother ! ” then said the preacher, with earnest sympathy and love, “ the hour of trial has arrived. The snow has fallen, — it has come down in mystery and silence. Your child, your baby, is no longer here.”

With a stifled cry of pain, Rebecca snatched the still, cold form of the infant to her breast, kissing it and clasping it with wild passion. William knelt down by her side, and folded both in his arms, — the agonized mother and her dead babe, — while Ironthorpe, rising, placed a hand upon the head of each, and, lifting up his voice, prayed for the Spirit of God to fill their broken hearts and sanctify their sorrow.

“ I declare, Cap’n Norburn,” said Reuben, entering the room, and learning what had taken place, “ me and you ’ve been drea’ful unfort’nate,

— that 's a fact. But you must bear up, — bear up, Cap'n, as I do."

The allusion to his own personal and pecuniary misfortunes seemed to afford Mr. Oakleaf immense satisfaction ; and he slapped William on the shoulder with an air which seemed to say, "I can sympathize with you, sir ; I've been there myself."

XXX.

CONSOLATION.

REBECCA's babe became a spirit on Tuesday. On Thursday, Ironthorpe and Reuben crossed the icy brook, and on the opposite hill-side scraped away the light covering of snow from a little space, and commenced digging in the frozen ground. With a spade and an iron bar they cut down among the forest roots, until they had hollowed out a grave large enough for an infant four months old.

The funeral was in the afternoon of the same day. It was the saddest scene the settlement yet had known. Let us not dwell upon it : for who cannot imagine the friends of the afflicted parents coming from miles around to be present at the forest funeral,—the mother mourning over the babe to which she had given birth in that lone spot, so far from all her friends, and

which she must now bury there before the eye of her own mother could look upon its form,—the father forgetting his own grief to comfort her,—and Ironthorpe preaching the Gospel of consolation over the infant lying before him so cold and white in its little coffin of pine boards?

The burial took place, and the people went away; Ironthorpe remaining with the parents.

On Saturday, when Salome was gone with Reuben over to their new house, which had lately been raised on the spot where the other was burned down, Rebecca for the first time found herself able to converse freely and calmly with the preacher.

Salome had attended upon the family through all their trials, with exceeding kindness, unconsciously endearing herself to that poor young mother's heart; yet, woman as she was, she had not those finer, deeper sympathies of the soul, which alone could call forth responses from the depths of Rebecca's nature. Ironthorpe possessed that power by right of suffering; but as long as Salome's shadow fell upon the floor, he could not use it as he would.

When the latter was gone, however, with

Timmy and the baby, — that baby, so hearty, and rosy, and strong, on which Rebecca could not look without feeling the cold clods that covered her own infant crush and chill her buried heart, intensifying all her pain, — and when William, in his sad solicitude for her, had gone out to wander in the woods, that she might be quite alone with her friend, — then first she gave full expression to those thoughts which were burning into her soul.

It appeared strange to her, when she thought of it, that the story of Ironthorpe's own sufferings drew her more out of herself, with softening, soothing influence, than any thing else. This fact he was quick to discover, and skilful to employ ; and listening to all those touching little incidents he had to relate about the decline and mortal change of his idolized boy, and to his own subsequent strange experience, which seemed so much harder than what she herself could bear and live, the poor childless mother felt her spirit fly up to the Infinite Father in resignation, gratitude, and love.

“ But I have not told you all my trials yet,” said Ironthorpe. “ I have given you only the small beginning. Would you hear more ? ”

“O yes!” exclaimed Rebecca; “you do me so much good!”

“When I had come to feel the truth of Eternal Life, I saw that it was more precious to the soul than all the world beside. To enter upon that Life,—this it is to enter heaven; this it is to be raised from the dead. What is life but the light of Divine Love within you? and what else is the true resurrection, but to come out of the earth’s darkness into that light of heaven? What then is the grave, but the suffering and the struggle through which every soul must pass, who crucifies the selfish, outward man, the old Adam, and is restored in the divine humanity, which is Christ?”

“This by degrees I saw and understood. And after a lapse of time I said, ‘O Christ! I will lay down my life for thee; not in word and profession only, but in spirit and in deed. All the world I will give, and count it as nothing, for thy love. Speak thou within my breast, and I will hear and obey, though all the earth should rise up and stone me.’

“I went out a new man. Then commenced the conflict. Because I spoke truth, and acted truth, and talked with my fellows without hy-

pocrisy, they hated me, they called me insane, they shrugged their shoulders at my approach. But all this was what I had foreseen ; it was not a heavy cross to bear. I heard the constant, still, small voice within.

“ But when ONE,” continued Ironthorpe, with a gush of emotion, — “ ONE whose soul had been a part of my soul, — ONE who was all I had left in the world after my boy was taken from me, — my wife, the mother of that boy — ”

He paused a moment, while his frame seemed to shake in every fibre with the old grief that swept back upon his heart.

“ O, tell me of her ! ” said Rebecca, weeping.

“ When she too turned from me,” he resumed, calmly but very sadly, “ then the sun was darkened, and the moon was changed to blood, and the heavens were a blot ; and I cried unto the mountains and rocks of oblivion to fall and hide me from the light of consciousness and life.”

“ How could she — how could she turn against you ? ” .

“ She was a woman. Her pride had never been crushed. She trembled when she saw me

take up my cross, and she believed the world when it called me mad. I do not complain. Deeper and deeper I descended into hell for her sake, but it was only to make my final resurrection the more glorious. O my sister ! learn this truth. The more you suffer for Christ, the nearer you get to him. He hath his reward who sunders all ties of life and love that hold him back from God, — the stronger and dearer the ties, the greater his reward. This is no dream of zealots, as I once supposed ; but it is reality, the one great reality, which I have proved, in which I now live, and in which I rejoice with joy that flows like a river perpetually into my soul. A wandering preacher in these solitudes, the poorest among the poor, the loneliest of all God's lonely ones, I have riches, O my sister ! amply great to repay one for the loss of a thousand worlds. I find the darkest paths in thickest forest-shades rainbowed all over with spiritual light. Desert places smile with flowers of peace blooming all round, and streams of wisdom running everywhere. This is reality ! this is reality ! I know it, I feel it in my inmost soul : and I can only thank God, — thank God, and weep ! ”

Rebecca rose from this communion strong and deeply happy. More and more she felt the wild love she had given her child brighten into a chain that led her gently up to God. From within came the light which illumined her spirit, and it flowed out, shining upon others through her meek, sweet face, her mild and tender eyes, and through every word and action of her life.

“O Lord !” she prayed, with a deep inward prayer which moved within her spirit night and day, “I thank thee for this light, I thank thee for this love.”

• In view of all her suffering, she could thank God for Love, which was the cause. So let us all who suffer in like manner thank God for Love, — for Love which alone can save us from that death which the false and selfish die ; which alone can purify and lift us up ; which alone can open the gates of heaven with its magic golden key.

Nay, answer not that Love destroys, — that Love corrupts, and drags us down, and shuts the heavenly gates. When drunk in gross and earthy vessels, it may indeed leave a salt and bitter taste upon the tongue ; but the bitterness and saltiness are not of the wine. Let the

heart be pure and unselfish, and it is a glorious thing to love, although the soul's warmest, deepest, holiest aspirations should be answered with the world's scorn and hatred,—even with death. To be loved is much indeed, but to love — to love — is ALL.

At different times Rebecca drew from her friend the full story of his separation from his wife. No tale she had ever heard or read seemed half so sad. Ironthorpe had loved as only two or three in whole societies of men and women are capable of loving; and in the tenderest spot a dagger had pierced his heart.

“And did she never relent?” inquired Rebecca.

“I cannot tell how much,” answered the preacher: “not enough to overcome her pride, however, I grieve to say. I have heard from her several times. I know that she is unhappy, languishing in a false, cold world. She has sent for me to return,—promising,” Ironthorpe added with a smile, “to forgive all. But I must abandon my honesty and my manhood, and live as other people live, and talk and smile and make my life a lie like them, else she will be ashamed! On the night when I

saw you first, I heard from her last. Learning something of me in these backwoods, she sent a younger brother to hunt me up, and make a final effort to bring me back. She loved me still, he said ; my absence was the sorrow of her life ; the wealth I had left in her hands she could not enjoy. I must return, — for her sake, I must return ; yet she could not sympathize in my views of the true life, and I would be expected to conform to society's established laws. I gave the young man my reply, and leaving the tavern, which stifled me with its close air, went forth into the woods to mourn and pray.

“O happy is he,” Ironthorpe continued, “whose father and mother, brother, sister, and wife, love him for the truth and in the truth ; who can travel with them hand in hand together up the shining hills of Life, giving and receiving strength ; who is not driven forth an exile for conscience' sake, but who goes on rejoicing in the new way he has found, and imparting joy to those he holds most dear. Yet blessed is he who is hated and reviled for the truth, — who lays down his life for the Spirit, — who chooses God in the wilderness before honor and fame in the world.”

As he ceased, Rebecca looked out, through the cold, wintry air, at the little mound on the hill-side, overshadowed by dark trees, where her little infant lay, and sighs swelled from her bosom, the floodgates of feeling were opened, and she wept without restraint. But she wept no more in utter woe; for even through the waters of her grief there welled up waters of purifying love, from a source which lay deep down beneath the fount of selfish passion, sanctifying alike with its ceaseless flow the desires and regrets, the joys and sorrows, of her gentle heart.

XXXI.

SNOW-FEATHER.

THE long winter wore at length away. Much that should have been written concerning the many trials and privations the Norburns endured in their backwoods home before the spring set in, with other incidents and scenes connected with their history, must be passed over in silence, owing to the narrow limits of a book like this. A complete picture of pioneer life, such as they experienced, it would require several volumes to elaborate ; and although I may at some time not far distant touch again upon the subject, I have nothing now to do but to bring the present sketches to a close.

The long winter, then, was passed, and Spring once more had come, holding up an apron full of flowers with one hand, scattering them all along, and carrying in the other a drip-

ping urn. She filled the woods with beauty and with song ; and also many hearts she filled with beauty, and with an overflowing sense of joy, which is the soul of song.

One afternoon in May Rebecca had a little company. Salome and Mrs. Haney were at the palace, and their husbands came to tea, by invitation. The small pine table was set in the neatest manner, with a white cloth, a fresh ball of butter, nice light biscuit, and the silver teaspoons.

Ironthorpe was expected to return that day from a journey he had made to the frontier ; and true to his appointment, he made his appearance just as the company were sitting down to supper.

“ Bless me ! ” cried Reuben, looking out of the door at his approach, “ what ’s that he ’s got in his arms ? There ! he puts it down. I declare for ’t, it ’s a little girl ! ”

The curiosity of the company was excited. Rebecca, with a beating heart, ran out to meet her friend, who was indeed leading a child by the hand along the forest path.

“ What on ’arth have you got there, Mr. Ironthorpe ? ” asked Reuben.

"A little waif of Providence, my good friends," answered the preacher, benignly.

"O the dear creature!" exclaimed Rebecca, kissing the child, which, though clad in rags, was sweet to look upon. "Whose is it, Mr. Ironthorpe?"

He replied with a playful evasion, inquiring if she did not think the parents of such a child were to be envied.

"Indeed, indeed," she said, with tears starting in her eyes, "they must be very happy. Let me take her in my arms. Will you come to me, dear?"

The child had looked quite frightened at first; of Reuben and Mrs. Haney she was particularly shy; and at the near approach of Salome she had begun to cry and cling to her protector. But a few kind words and kinder smiles from Rebecca completely won her, and with a laugh she put out her little hands to be taken.

"I bet that 's the baby that was buried in the ground over on the hill, there," observed Timmy Oakleaf to his friend Miles junior, in a whisper of profound and mysterious wisdom.

"Just as if Mrs. Norburn would n't know it

if it was!" replied Miles, with an air of superior discernment. "It 's another baby Mr. Ironthorpe has brought her, more like."

"Don't she talk at all?" asked William, who was scarcely less pleased than Rebecca with the little stranger.

"She is old enough, that 's a sartin case," remarked Reuben.

"True; but she has been for some time among the Indians ——"

"Among the Indians! Poor thing! poor, dear thing!" exclaimed Rebecca, with gushing sympathy.

"I obtained her of a hunter," added Ironthorpe. "He had bought her of an old squaw for a bottle of whiskey, and did not know what to do with his purchase."

"But where are her parents?" asked William, warming with interest.

"I cannot learn any thing of them. The squaw confessed that the child had been stolen from the whites, but protested that she did not know where it had been stolen, or whether its parents were still alive."

"That was putting a bottle of whiskey to a good use," suggested Miles Haney.

" 'T would have been as well, I guess, to have let her remain with the Indians," said his wife, in an under tone. " Who 'll want the care of such a helpless thing ? "

" O Mr. Ironthorpe ! " cried Rebecca, with a heart overflowing with feeling, " will you leave her with us ? Will you let us keep her and call her our own until her parents are found ? "

As she pressed the child with maternal fondness, Ironthorpe questioned Captain Norburn with his eye.

" We will take the best care of her, and be very thankful," added William.

" Good ! " said Ironthorpe, smiling serenely. " I meant that you should first propose to take her ; but all the time I designed her for you. "

" What did I tell you, Tim Oakleaf ? " whispered Miles junior, triumphantly.

Rebecca was beside herself with joy. She wept and laughed, and clasped the child to her heart, and showed her to William and the rest with a real motherly sort of pride.

" See what pretty blue eyes ! what a sweet mouth ! Did you ever see such handsome curls ? What is her name ? "

Her real name could not be ascertained.

The child herself had forgotten, or could not speak it. But the Indians had called her "SNOW-FEATHER," because she was white and light, and had fallen into their hands in the winter.

"Snow-Feather! what a pretty fancy!" exclaimed Rebecca. "We too will call her so, until she gets big enough to want another name."

"I guess your biscuit are getting cold," suggested Mrs. Haney, bringing a little cold water to temper Rebecca's enthusiasm. "Had n't we better sit down?"

"O yes! supper is all ready," cried Rebecca. "Salome, will you pour the tea? I want to hold Snow-Feather."

"Seems to me I'd let her wait and eat with Miles and Timmy," put in Reuben. "They'll l'arn her to play with the baby."

"Don't you do no such thing, Becky," said Salome. "I'll pour the tea. I ought to be willing to, since you don't drink any."

Rebecca was too highly delighted with her new charge to give much heed to any thing else. The company seated themselves after William's directions; he passed the butter, the biscuit, and the preserves, and the ceremony of tea was begun.

Suddenly there was a crash. Mr. Oakleaf, with a full teacup and saucer, which he was passing to Mrs. Haney from Salome, had disappeared from above board, with a cry of dismay. The company were startled ; but he got up again, declaring that he was not hurt, and showing the cup and saucer — emptied of half their contents, but not broken — in triumph.

“ I guess you ’ve drank something besides tea to-day,” laughed Miles Haney.

“ You may risk me there ! ” cried Reuben, re-arranging the milking-stool — which he had adopted in place of a chair — upon the treacherous stick of wood which had given him the fall. “ I ’ve let the other stuff alone since I burnt my house up with it. We ’re all temperance folks in this neighborhood now, Mr. Ironthorpe, — ’cepting p’raps friend Pangborn, who says he still takes a drop now and then.”

Ironthorpe smiled genially, and expressed his gratification.

“ It ’s a fact, I believe,” added Miles Haney ; “ and Cap’n Norburn may well be proud of having taken the lead in a reform which turns out so popular.”

“ ’Beats all what a respect everybody has

had for him, since the logging-bee, when he emptied his jug of whiskey on the ground," pursued Reuben. "If I'd done the same at my bee, I should have been the gainer."

William colored a good deal through the brown of his cheeks at these complimentary allusions, and modestly transferred all the praise to Ironthorpe, as the prime mover in the cause of cold water.

Meanwhile the women conversed about Snow-Feather, who nestled in Rebecca's arms with looks of happy wonder. They were interrupted by the crying of Salome's baby, which Timmy had pinched ever so lightly at Miles's suggestion, in order that its noise might hurry the "old folks" through their duties at the tea-table. The result was that Timmy got a box on the ear, instead of the biscuit his mother was spreading for him, and Miles saw the termination of the long supper ceremony delayed by the very stratagem he had invented for shortening it.

XXXII.

AN ARRIVAL. — CONCLUSION.

"HILLO! what 's that!" cried Reuben.
"'Seems to me I hear a wagon."

"It 's a one-hoss wagon with a woman and a boy in it," responded Miles from the door.

Rebecca started from the table, with Snow-Feather in her arms.

"O William! it 's ma, — it 's ma and Isaac!" she exclaimed, putting down the child, and running out to meet the visitors.

Such a meeting as it was! Never did costly carriage bring to expectant hearts a more precious freight of life than that which came that evening to Rebecca in a dilapidated, old-fashioned vehicle, drawn by a decrepit white horse. Such smothered expressions of joy, such crying and laughing and kissing, I think it doubtful if you ever witnessed, kind reader.

The company ran out to greet Mrs. Baldwin, only Mrs. Haney remaining behind to eat a morsel of biscuit she had richly buttered, and to finish her cup of tea. Ironthorpe, holding Snow-Feather in his arms in the door-way, looked on with a bright smile of sympathy, which told how keenly he relished a scene which made mother and daughter, son-in-law, and son, and all, so supremely happy.

"As soon as I heard about your baby, Becky," said Mrs. Baldwin, at length, bursting into tears, "I could n't stand it any longer. 'I must go and see Becky,' says I, 'if I have to walk every step of the way,' says I. So I got your father's consent, and off I come with Isaac and old Nance."

"O ma!" sobbed Rebecca. "My poor baby! — if you could only have seen it!"

William conducted his mother-in-law into the hut, and instantly, at sight of the little room, its neatness and economy, and the table set, with the silver teaspoons in the midst of all, smiles of pleasant humor dawned upon her benevolent face, and the light of happiness shone through her tears.

And here let our story end, as it seems fit it

Conclusion

should. A full account of Mrs. Baldwin's visit the bundle of news she opened for her friends touching upon all the deaths, marriages, and other fatalities and mischances which had occurred in their native town; her condolence with Rebecca in all her trials, which she made her detail over and over again; her motherly advice, and criticisms on the young wife's housekeeping; her wise discovery — made by tasting the cream in her tea — that the cow wanted salt, with other oracular sayings; his admiration of Ironthorpe, of whom Rebecca was so proud, and her love for little Snow Feather, of whom Rebecca was so fond; and her final departure on her homeward journey with Isaac, the old white horse, and the dilapidated wagon, leaving Rebecca so sad and yet so thankful, — these pictures can only be sketched thus briefly in outline, and left for the reader's imagination to complete.

And the subsequent history of William and Rebecca, — ah, would it might be written by a abler pen than mine! How, in the midst of their many outward trials, the inward peace of the soul ran like a deep river under all of obstructions in their way; how, while the wilder

ness bloomed around them, they prospered and progressed in all things good and true, as well as in worldly comforts and possessions; how they smiled on all God's creatures lovingly, as the good God smiled on them, while hand in hand they journeyed the upward road;—if this humble story could be told aright, every heart it reached must be made wiser and better by the lesson of their lives.

Snow-Feather, too,—that little waif of Providence cast upon the desolate shore of Rebecca's heart, to cheer its loneliness and fill its void,—deserves remembrance. Playing in the home of strangers, and growing up to maidenhood, followed by tender plants of infancy scarce more beloved than she, daughter of unknown parents,—forgetting all the romance of her history, to be a true child of the kind souls that had adopted her, and to repay their fondness with a loving heart and helping hands,—Snow-Feather! what shall be said of thee and of thy destiny? Nothing,—nothing in this place, lest I should say too little,—or too much.

What then shall be said of Ironthorpe,—that great, true soul, so faintly revealed in these pages, casting lights and shadows here and

there, somewhat like a vaguely defined figure holding a lantern in the background of a picture, — what shall be said of him ?

When, after doing his work in the new settlements, which grew so fair and fast, he departed for wilder and wider fields of labor, giving place to younger preachers, he said to his weeping friends, — to William and Rebecca, and others who loved him, — as they bade him farewell ; — he said with a sad, sweet smile, looking upward, with a face serene and bright with heavenly trust, “ LET ME BE FORGOTTEN ! ”

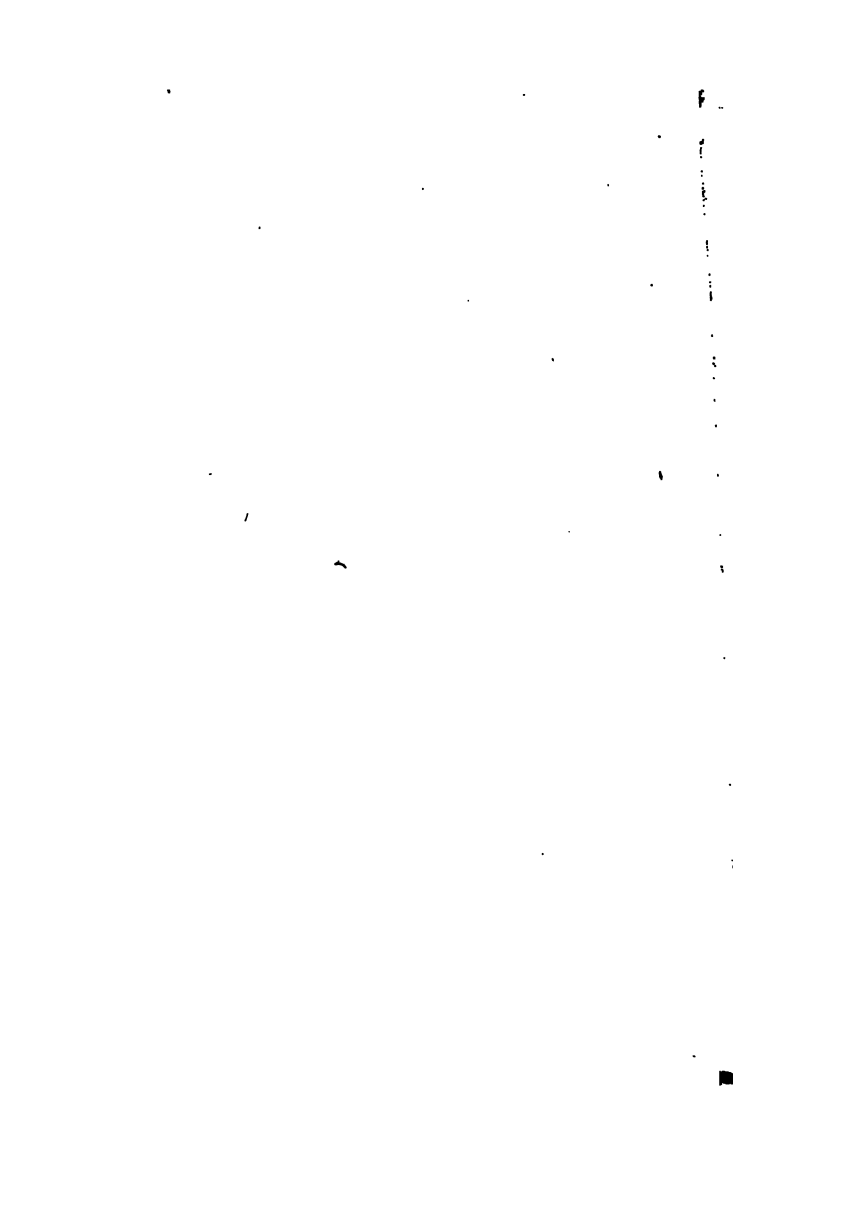
FORGOTTEN ! shall it be so ?

Not as I say, O reader ! O friend ! who have followed my pen thus far ; but as you, in your kindness for the writer of these pages, can afford

*And who writes
I ought to have*
THE END.
WHA









[REDACTED]

JUN 21 1928

[REDACTED]

